Eleanor Sadleir
Hawley House
May 21st
1866.

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THE

SPANISH MATCH

OR

CHARLES STUART AT MADRID.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

Carlos Estuardo soy,
Que, siendo amor mi guia,
Al cielo de Espana voy
Por ver my estrella Maria.

LOPE DE VEGA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BOOK IV.

(CONTINUED.)

FIESTAS REALES.

V.

THE CASA SALDANA.

THE Casa Saldana was a large mansion, delightfully situated in the Paseo de Recoletos, which formed a continuation of the Prado; and though in the midst of all the life and gaiety of Madrid, it had some of the advantages of a country-house, possessing large and delightful gardens, and being surrounded by a wood, to which the conde had private access.

When Graham paid his first visit to the casa he was received with open arms by the old conde-

who appeared enchanted to see him, and renewed all his former expressions of gratitude for the service rendered by Graham to himself and his daughter. He also spoke of his surprise on learning that his deliverers were no other than the Prince of Wales and his attendants. The conde was alone at the time, and when Graham inquired after Doña Casilda, the old hidalgo told him she was in the garden, and at once conducted him thither. On issuing forth, and crossing a trimly-kept grass-plot, bordered by flower beds, they found Doña Casilda seated in an arbour with two other persons, who proved to be her sister, Doña Flor, and Don Pompeo de Tarsis.

Casilda greeted her lover with undisguised delight. Graham thought her looking lovelier than ever, and certainly she was seen to much greater advantage than she had been after the robber attack in the gorge of Pancorbo. Her costume was the same as that worn by every other Spanish

lady—namely, a black silk dress edged with magnificent lace, and a mantilla. Nothing could have better suited her beauty than this attire. Her jetty tresses—so intensely black that they looked almost blue—were adorned by a blush rose fastened at the side of her head, and she shielded herself from the sun with her fan. After their first greetings were over, Doña Casilda introduced him to Doña Flor and Don Pompeo.

"This is Don Ricardo—my gallant deliverer—of whom you have heard me speak so often," said Casilda, presenting him to her sister.

A blush overspread Doña Flor's features as she returned Graham's salutation.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Don Ricardo," she said. "I believe you are a friend of the Duke de Cea. I have heard him speak of you, and in very flattering terms."

Evidently the reference to the Duke de Cea did not operate as a recommendation to Don Pompeo,

for he bowed very stiffly when Graham was presented to him.

Shortly afterwards the old conde and his son-in-law quitted the arbour, leaving Graham to the two ladies, with whom he engaged in a very lively conversation. After awhile Doña Flor made some excuse for quitting them, and Graham was then enabled to pour forth his love, which he did in the most passionate terms. There was nothing perhaps in the words, but the unmistakable fervour with which they were uttered gave them the force of the most eloquent pleading. Coming direct from the heart of the speaker, they made their way at once to the heart of her who listened to them. Casilda's heightened colour and agitation proclaimed their effect upon her. But she cast down her eyes, and did not dare to meet Graham's gaze.

"You do not answer me, Casilda," he cried, at last. "You do not love me."

"Oh, do not say so, Ricardo!" she rejoined,

raising her magnificent black eyes, and fixing them tenderly upon him. "Yes, yes, I love you. But do you not know that my father has promised me to another?"

"I have heard so," replied Graham. "But he will not force you to wed against your inclinations."

"My father is a Castilian, Ricardo, and unless Don Christóbal de Gavina will release him from his promise, he must fulfil it."

"But you—you will never consent, Casilda?" cried Graham.

"Alas! I shall not be consulted," she replied.

Just as the words were uttered, a young richly-dressed cavalier was seen to issue from the open window of the casa, and make his way across the grass-plot towards the arbour. This personage, who had a distinguished air, was tall—very tall for a Spaniard—well made, and handsome. His complexion was swarthy, his eyes dark and full of fire. He was attired in a doublet and mantle

of black velvet laced with silver, and had tall white plumes in his black hat.

A strange feeling crossed Graham as he regarded this personage, and seemed to warn him of the approach of an enemy.

The look of inquiry which he addressed to Casilda was thus answered, "Yes, it is Don Christóbal."

"I felt sure of it," he mentally ejaculated. "By Heaven! he is no contemptible rival."

Shortly afterwards the two young men were brought face to face, and Don Christóbal, who proved to be extremely courteous, manifested no displeasure on finding his intended bride conversing with a handsome stranger. On the contrary, he seemed pleased to make Graham's acquaintance. His presence, however, operated as a restraint to Graham and Doña Casilda, and little more passed between them. By this time the rest of the party had returned to the arbour, and the

conversation, which had now become general, began to turn upon the prince's visit to Madrid, and Doña Flor and her sister both expressed great anxiety to know when his highness's nuptials with the Infanta would be solemnised.

"We must apply to you, Don Ricardo," remarked Don Christóbal, turning to Graham. "You must be well informed. Is the day yet fixed?"

"I have not heard so," returned Graham.

"In my opinion, the prince's gallantry deserves a prompt reward," said Doña Casilda. "The marriage ought to take place immediately."

"The Pope's consent has to be obtained, and his Holiness seems in no hurry to give it," observed Graham.

"Everybody says the prince is about to become a convert," pursued Casilda. "I hope it is true, and then perhaps all his suite will follow his example."

"If the prince becomes a proselyte, I will, señora," replied Graham.

"You think you can safely make that promise, I suppose, señor," laughed Casilda.

"The prince only needs to be freed from his heretical notions to be perfect," pursued Doña Flor. "A more gallant cavalier I never beheld. He eclipsed all who attended him in the procession."

"Even the king?" said Graham.

"Yes, even the king," she rejoined. "The Infanta is most fortunate in obtaining such a husband."

"You speak as if the affair were quite settled," remarked Don Pompeo, gravely. "But I believe the marriage to be as far off as ever, and it will not surprise me if it should not take place at all."

"Impossible! after all the prince has done," cried Casilda. "Were I the Infanta, I *would* have him, in spite of his majesty and the Conde-Duque."

Some laughter followed this remark, but Don Pompeo did not join in it.

"You talk foolishly, Casilda," he said. "State marriages are not like other marriages. Religious differences are at the bottom of the delay. If the prince becomes a convert, all will be settled. But I don't think that event will occur."

"You doubt everything," said Doña Flor. "How long are the court festivities to continue, Don Christóbal?"

"Till the prince is weary of them," he replied. "Next week there will be a grand bull-fight in the Plaza Mayor, at which the prince and the Infanta, with the king and queen and all the court, will assist. If you have never seen a bull-fight, Don Ricardo," he added, turning to Graham, "you will see one in perfection on this occasion. It will be a magnificent affair. There will be splendid bulls and splendid horses.

"Oh! charming! charming!—that will be de-

delightful!" cried both ladies, clapping their hands.

"I am curious to behold the national spectacle," remarked Graham. "You are a skilful torero, I am told, señor," he added to Don Christóbal.

"Oh! I have killed some bulls in my time," replied the other. "It is a very exciting sport—nothing like it."

"I wish you could take part in the exhibition, Don Ricardo," observed Casilda.

"If you desire it, I will," he replied, gallantly. "The Duke de Cea has asked me to be his companion in the ring. I have had no practice in such sports, but as I am a tolerably good horseman, and have a quick eye and a strong hand, I fancy I should be a match for a bull."

"With De Cea in the ring with you, you will be in no danger," said Don Christóbal.

"Yes, yes—the duke is an admirable picador!" exclaimed Doña Flor, rapturously.

Don Pompeo looked sternly at his wife, but made no remark.

"I adore a bull-fight," said Doña Casilda. "A cavalier never appears to so great advantage in a lady's eyes as when engaged in a contest with the fierce and active animal."

"I am glad I shall have an opportunity of so displaying myself, señora," said Graham. "I would ask permission to wear your colours."

"May I grant it?" she said, turning to Don Christóbal.

"No, that is a license I can grant to no man," he replied. "I shall wear your colours myself, Casilda. You may not be aware, señor," he added, turning with constrained courtesy to Graham, "that this lady is contracted to me."

"Yes, I am aware of the engagement," returned Graham. "And I feel I ought not to have made the request."

Thinking the conversation was taking an awk-

ward turn, and might lead to a quarrel, the Conde de Saldana proposed an adjournment to the house. A significant glance from Doña Casilda warned Graham of the mistake he had committed, and he determined to be more cautious in future.

By his subsequent deportment he endeavoured to set matters right, but it was evident that Don Christóbal's jealousy had been aroused. Neither did Doña Casilda's betrothed seem pleased when her father again begged Graham to make the Casa Saldana his home.

With the exception of the misunderstanding which had thus arisen between him and Don Christóbal, Graham had reason to be satisfied with his visit. He had received from Casilda's own lips an assurance that she loved him, and though many difficulties were in the way, he felt confident of ultimate success.

A trifling incident, however, occurred prior to his departure which caused him some uneasiness.

While he was crossing a patio, covered with an awning to exclude the sun, he noticed in the upper gallery of the quadrangle a young woman, who was leaning over the railing and regarding him earnestly. Her features, which were strikingly handsome, seemed familiar to Graham, but at first he could not tell where, or under what circumstances, he had previously seen her. All at once it flashed across him that it must be Rose des Bois, the damsel he had met in the robbers' cottage in the Forest of Orléans; and further scrutiny convinced him he was right. Rose's looks plainly showed that she had recognised him, and her large dark eyes followed him as he walked through the patio. Graham wondered how she came there, and her presence was anything but agreeable to him. An instinctive feeling told him she would be in the way, and prove an enemy to his love-affair with Doña Casilda.

The only person with him at the moment when

he thus beheld her was the Conde de Saldana, who with true Spanish politeness insisted upon attending his guest to the door.

"I think I have seen that damsel before," remarked Graham, pointing to Rose. "But, if I am not mistaken, it was near Orléans."

"That is not unlikely," replied the conde. "She has but just arrived from France."

"She must have travelled very quickly," said Graham. "I should not have thought it possible she could get here in so short a time."

"She was brought on by a Spanish family who were travelling from Paris to Madrid, and by whom she was recommended to my daughter," said the conde. "Casilda has taken an extraordinary fancy to her, and as Doña Engracia, her dueña, is unwell, I have appointed Rosa—for so the damsel is named—to attend upon her."

Graham made no remark, though the latter piece of information was far from satisfactory to him, as

he felt sure he should not be able to elude Rose's vigilance as easily as he might have done that of Doña Engracia.

But he had now arrived at the outer door, and as he took leave the conde prayed him to consider himself one of the family, and to come whenever he felt disposed, promising him a hearty welcome.

VI.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

CHARLES had given up all hopes of another interview with the Infanta, and had again lapsed into a state of doubt and despondency, when he was revived by the Duke de Cea, who appeared before him one morning with a radiant countenance, and said,

"At last I have succeeded. Your highness shall see the princess to-night. I cannot tell you where, at this moment, because the meeting has to be arranged by the Countess de Olivarez, who has pro-

mised her assistance, but I will come to your chamber at midnight, and conduct you to the place of rendezvous."

Thanking the young duke warmly, Charles promised to be in readiness at the hour appointed. On seeking his chamber that night, he dismissed his attendants, and sat down to read, but he was far too much excited to be able to fix his attention on the volume before him, though it recounted the adventures of the renowned Don Quixote, and he at last laid the marvellous romance aside, and began to pace to and fro within the room. Shortly before midnight the door was softly opened, and De Cea entered the room.

The young duke's countenance showed that all was right, so, without stopping to question him, Charles hastily donned his cloak and hat, and bade him lead on.

"Whither are you taking me, duke?" said the prince, as they descended a private staircase.

"To the patio," replied De Cea. "There your highness will find the Lady Infanta."

Traversing a corridor on the ground floor, they soon reached the patio, which was situated, as already mentioned, at the rear of the prince's quarter of the palace.

This beautiful Arabian court formed part of the ancient Alcazar, and was surrounded by marble arcades. The interior was filled with orange-trees, and in the centre there was a fountain. At that still hour the court was charming. The air was loaded with fragrance, and all was so hushed in repose that the plashing of the fountain in its marble basin could be distinctly heard. One side of the patio was lighted up by the moon, the other buried in gloom.

On entering the court, Charles gazed anxiously down the moonlit arcade, but, seeing no one, he proceeded to the farther side, where two female figures, attired in black, and draped in mantillas,

met his view. Both ladies were masked, but Charles entertained no doubt that they were the Infanta and the Countess de Olivarez.

As he hurried towards them, De Cea stood still, while one of the masked dames, instead of waiting for the prince's approach, withdrew to the farther end of the arcade. Charles was thus left alone with the other, and on reaching her he immediately threw himself at her feet, and seizing her hand, pressed it passionately to his lips, imploring her to remove her mask.

Unable to resist his passionate importunities, the Infanta took off her mask, and regarded him for some moments with a tenderness which she did not seek to disguise. There was no necessity to avow her love by words. Her looks proclaimed the state of her feelings.

The rapture of those moments—the certainty he then obtained that his passion was requited—made Charles ample amends for all the anxiety he had

endured. Arising from his kneeling posture, but without quitting the hand which the Infanta did not seek to withdraw, he gazed at her long and passionately.

"Oh, Maria!" he cried, at length. "The bliss of this moment would be cheaply purchased by a kingdom. A crown without you to share it with me would be valueless in my eyes. So deeply —so fervently do I love you, that I would rather tarry with you in some lowly dwelling in Spain than return to my father's palace without you."

"Have a care, prince," she rejoined. "You assert too much. I shall put your love to the test. I do not ask you to make any worldly sacrifice for me. I do not desire you to make further concessions to the king my brother—I love you, Charles Stuart, I love you—I will be a true and loving wife to you—I will make your country my country—your people my people. But before I do this, I require that you conform to the holy faith of Rome."

"Impossible, Maria. You ask the only sacrifice I cannot make," replied Charles, in a sad but resolute tone.

"You do not love me as deeply as you have affirmed," she said, reproachfully. "If you did, you could not hesitate. But I can never wed you save on this condition."

"You crush all my hopes by the determination, Maria," cried the prince, in a voice of anguish. "And if you persist in it, all chance of our union is over. But the king your brother has made no such condition. He can dispose of your hand as he thinks fit."

"Not so," she replied, firmly. "Philip can prevent my marriage, but he cannot force me into an alliance to which I am opposed. I will withdraw from the world altogether, and immure myself in a convent, rather than endanger my soul."

"You terrify me, Maria," cried Charles; "but I can scarcely believe you seriously contemplate so fatal a step."

"I trust the step will never be necessary," she rejoined. "I still fondly persuade myself that I shall be able to convert you. My confessor, Padre Ambrosio, is a good man—an excellent man—and has your interest at heart. Will you see him?—will you listen to him, if I send him to you?"

"I will do anything you require," replied Charles. "But I announce beforehand that Father Ambrosio will throw away his time in attempting my conversion."

"But for my sake listen to him. I have promised him that you will do so."

"You have promised him—ha?" cried Charles. "Now, tell me frankly, Maria, has not Father Ambrosio charged you to attempt my conversion?"

"I will not deny it. I could not disguise from him what passed between us in the garden of the Casa del Campo, and he has warned me of my danger in marrying a heretic. But he believes that he can convince you of your errors, and feels certain you will embrace our faith."

"One question more, Maria," said Charles. "Is Father Ambrosio aware that you intended to meet me to-night? Nay, I am sure he is," he pursued, after a slight pause. "Did he not prompt you what to say to me? Did he not tell you to make my conversion the indispensable condition of our union? You cannot deny it. Well, you have fulfilled his instructions."

"Would I could assure him that I have made an impression upon you, Charles!" she said.

"Tell him so," he rejoined.

"May I?" she exclaimed, joyfully.

"Certainly; and if he questions you closely—as no doubt he will—add that you have hopes of my assent—for you *have* hopes, I am sure."

"May I say so much as that?" she cried. "I fear my arguments will never prevail with you, but if you will listen to Padre Ambrosio, he cannot fail to convince you. See him—only see him!"

"Willingly, since you desire it," rejoined Charles.

"Indeed, I desire to be on good terms with Padre Ambrosio."

"From this moment you may calculate upon his zealous co-operation," said the Infanta. "He will now promote our union as much as he has hitherto opposed it."

Their further discourse was here interrupted by the Duke de Cea, who, stepping quickly towards them, said, in a low, warning voice, "Some one approaches!"

At this alarm, Maria instantly resumed her mask.

"Adios, prince," she cried.

"Do not go till you have promised to meet me again, Maria," cried Charles, detaining her.

"I cannot stay. We shall be discovered. Santa Maria! it is too late," she cried, as two cavaliers entered the arcade.

By this time the Countess de Olivarez had joined the party.

"What shall we do, countess?" said the Infanta, in great trepidation.

"Stay where you are, princess. There is nothing to fear. Those intruders will pass on," rejoined the countess, in a low voice.

"By Heaven, it is the king!" said De Cea. "We are lost."

"Madre santissima! my brother!" cried the Infanta. "What will he say to me?"

It was a moment of great perplexity, and even Charles felt himself placed in a position of the utmost embarrassment. No doubt could now be entertained that it was the king, and that the person by whom his majesty was attended was the Conde-Duque.

The only hope was that Philip and Olivarez would pass on. But they did not do so. Both ladies were masked, and Charles had pulled his hat over his brow and muffled his face in his cloak, so that his features could not be distinguished.

"Who have we here?" demanded Philip.

Finding that nothing else could be done, De

Cea plucked up his courage, and stepped towards the king.

"'Tis I, sire," he said.

"De Cea!" cried Philip.

"Hush, sire! do not betray me," said the duke. "Your majesty is too gallant to interrupt a little love-affair."

"Who is the other cavalier? There can be no reason for concealment on his part," said the king.

"I implore your majesty to excuse my answering the question," said De Cea.

"I must be satisfied," said Philip. "I have strong suspicions. Who is it?"

"Since your majesty compels me to speak, I must own that it is the Duke of Buckingham," replied De Cea.

"Buckingham!" exclaimed Olivarez. "And who are the ladies with him?"

"Ay, who are they?" demanded the king.

"You cannot expect me to reveal their names, sire."

"What! my lord—you refuse to satisfy me?"

"I am bound to do so, sire."

"Then I will have an answer from their own lips," said Philip. "Bid them come to me."

"Nay, I beseech your majesty not to pursue this inquiry further," rejoined De Cea, beginning to be seriously alarmed.

"Heed not what he says, sire," remarked Olivarez, in a low voice. "There is something wrong here."

"Obey my orders, duke," said Philip, authoritatively.

Almost at his wits' end, De Cea returned to the others and told them what the king required. For a moment they appeared confounded, and the Infanta declared she would throw herself at her brother's feet and implore his pardon.

"No, no, we may yet get over the difficulty," said the countess. "Speak to the Conde-Duque, while I address the king. Courage, princess—courage!"

With this the countess tripped towards Philip, and, taking him aside, said:

"I trust myself to your majesty. You will not betray me to my husband."

"Cielo! is it you, countess?" cried Philip, in surprise.

"Not so loud, sire, I entreat of you," she rejoined. "The lady with me is Doña Flor."

"Enough," returned Philip. "Pray excuse the stupid act I have committed. I will not detain you a moment longer."

Meanwhile, the Infanta approached the Conde-Duque, and drew him aside.

"Your excellency must help me in this strait," she said. "The king will never forgive me if he learns the truth."

"Is it possible it can be the Infanta?" cried Olivarez.

"Do you not recognise my voice?" she rejoined.

"Yes, yes," he answered. "But why are you here, princess, with the Duke of Buckingham?"

"That is not Buckingham, my lord—it is the prince."

"The prince!" exclaimed Olivarez. "Nay, then, I cannot hide the matter from his majesty."

"Hold, my lord!" said the Infanta. "This private meeting with the prince has been sanctioned by Padre Ambrosio. You will be satisfied with the result when I tell you that his highness is likely to become a proselyte to the faith of Rome. He has consented to see Padre Ambrosio to-morrow."

"Ah! that is good news indeed," cried Olivarez. "Padre Ambrosio has pursued the best plan to convert the prince. You shall have no interference from me, princess. I will make some excuse to the king." Then, turning to Philip, he added, "Your majesty need not question this lady."

"No; it is sufficent that you have spoken to her," replied the king. "I know who she is."

"Indeed, sire!" exclaimed Olivarez, uneasily.

"Yes, it is Doña Flor," rejoined Philip.

"Very true," said Olivarez, laughing. "He little thinks it is the Infanta. A propos, sire, who is the other lady?"

"Nay, your excellency must excuse me. I am bound to secresy. He little thinks it is his wife," thought Philip, laughing to himself.

Then, bowing to the two ladies, who deferentially returned his salutation, he quitted the patio with Olivarez.

As soon as they were gone, Charles, who had remained stationary, joined the group.

"Admirably managed!" he cried. "You have extricated yourselves from this difficulty with wonderful skill."

"I can't tell how I got through it," said the Infanta. "I was never so frightened in my life."

"I had most cause for alarm," observed De Cea, laughing. "Had a discovery been made, my head would not have remained long on my shoulders."

"In getting out of one difficulty I have fallen into another," said the countess. "His majesty must have a dreadful opinion of me."

"Don't trouble yourself on that score, dear countess," said the Infanta. "All will be satisfactorily explained hereafter. But I must regain my apartments as soon as possible. Good night, prince," she added to Charles. "Remember your promise to see Padre Ambrosio."

So saying, she hurried away with the countess, moving off in the opposite direction from that taken by the king and his minister.

VII.

IN WHICH ARCHIE READS THE PRINCE A LECTURE.

GENERALLY, about an hour before noon, all the persons composing Charles's suite would assemble in the great gallery adjoining his apartments, and after amusing themselves there for some time, talking over the court gossip, and retailing such anecdotes as they had picked up, they repaired to the ante-chamber, where they remained until they were admitted to the prince's presence. Most of them were young men, and their principal motive in coming to Madrid being

amusement, they had no reason to be dissatisfied. Ever since the prince's arrival there had been an uninterrupted series of royal festivities, in which of course they had shared. The most unbounded hospitality was displayed towards all Englishmen. They were everywhere welcome. Every house was open to them. The bewitching Madrileñas smiled upon them, and the proudest Castilians unbent towards them. How they requited this consideration we have shown.

On the morning after the midnight meeting of the royal lovers in the patio, described in the previous chapter, the greater part of the English visitants were collected in the grand gallery. Almost all, as we have said, were young, handsome, richly attired, and of distinguished appearance. Silken doublets of various hues, velvet mantles richly embroidered, plumed and jewelled hats, constituted their attire. A more joyous band could not be found. They talked and

laughed loudly, shouted to each other, sang, danced, smoked, and practised fencing. One group, which consisted of Lord Andover, Sir Richard Carr, and Sir Robert Goring, were seated at a table in the embrasure of a window playing at cards. Not far from them, surrounded by a circle of laughing spectators, Lord Rochford and Tom Carey were rattling castanets and practising a bolero, which they had seen danced overnight. Farther on there was another ring, in the midst of which were two gay gallants keeping their hands in with a little harmless sword-play. Somewhat removed from the rest were the Earl of Carlisle and Lord Mountjoy conversing with Sir Francis Steward, who was about to return to England; while flitting from group to group, jesting with all, might be seen a grotesque little personage in a motley garb, with a coxcomb on his head, and a bauble in his hand. This was Archie Armstrong.

Seeing Sir Richard Graham enter the gallery, the jester went to meet him.

"Good day, my merry gossip," said Graham. "I have scarce had a word with thee since thy arrival in Madrid. How dost like the city, the court, the king, the queen, and the Infanta?"

"You ask me too many questions in a breath, gossip," replied Archie, "but I will strive to answer them. I like the city well, though it be not so large nor so well built as I expected. But 'tis a fine city nevertheless, and has a gayer air than London. I like the dresses of the Madrileños, and, sooth to say, I like their manners. I like to hear the tinkling of a guitar, and to listen to a serenade at night. And then those adorable, dark-eyed señoras—I am enchanted with them, and so are they with me, for that matter. As to the court, I prefer it to Whitehall."

"How so, gossip?" said Graham.

"I like the grandees, with their proud car-

riage and stately manners," replied the jester. "They really look like nobles. As to his Most Catholic Majesty, I will tell you what I think of him when we get back. I am afraid to speak my mind here. But I will just whisper in your ear that the real king is Olivarez. Whether Philip is fortunate in his choice of a favourite and prime minister, I won't pretend to say, but he is certainly fortunate in his spouse. And now as to the Infanta. Looking at her with the eyes of Babie Charlie, I should discover nothing but what is captivating. But looking at her with my own eyes, I am not so greatly delighted. Beautiful she is, no doubt, but it is not a beauty to my taste, and her excessive coldness of manner may please the prince, but it wouldn't suit me. I have a dark-eyed señora in my eye at this moment whom I should infinitely prefer to her."

"Who has thus taken thy fancy, gossip?"

"Be not jealous when I name her to you. 'Tis

Doña Casilda, daughter of the Conde de Saldana."

"Doña Casilda!" exclaimed Graham. "Where hast thou seen her?"

"I saw her yesterday, when she came to the palace with her father," replied the jester. "Think you she could escape my observation?"

"Well, I agree with thee in thy estimate of her beauty," said Graham.

"I knew you would, gossip," rejoined Archie, knowingly. "Between ourselves, I think you have a much better chance of taking back a wife than our illustrious prince."

"I know not that, Archie," said Graham. "In my case there is a rival."

"A rival is easily got rid of by a man of your mettle, gossip," rejoined the jester. "But, though the prince has no rival—at least, that I know of—he has what is far worse, a cunning minister to deal with, who will not let him have

the prize he covets, unless he pays dearly for it. Mark my words, gossip. I have not been many days in this palace, but I have had my eyes and ears open, and I have seen and heard enough to convince me that unless Babie Charlie turns Papist he won't have the Infanta. What is more, all the royal household feel certain he will become a proselyte."

"You think so?" cried Graham.

"I am sure of it," said Archie. "What would my royal gossip say if he knew of his son's danger?"

"Danger!" exclaimed Graham, contemptuously. "You do not for an instant imagine that the prince is likely to yield."

"There is no saying what influence may be brought to bear upon him," said Archie. "In my opinion, it would have been better if he had stayed at home."

"Perhaps it might," returned Graham, thought-

fully. "Well, I am going to present myself to his highness."

"I am with you," said Archie. "I mean to read him a lecture."

With this, they proceeded to the ante-chamber. On entering it, the usher informed them that Padre Ambrosio was with the prince, and that his highness could not be disturbed—a piece of information that astounded Graham, and elicited a shrug from the jester.

Ere long the confessor came forth, and his exulting looks seemed to indicate that his interview with Charles had been perfectly satisfactory to him.

On entering the cabinet, Graham and the jester found Charles standing near a table in a pensive posture—indeed, he was so preoccupied that he did not notice them, and two or three minutes elapsed before he became aware of their presence. Even when he did perceive them, he did not trouble himself to speak.

"I will rouse him from his reverie," said Archie. And marching towards the table, he called out in a voice so exactly resembling the broad Scottish accents of his royal master, James, that the prince absolutely started.

"Babie Charlie! Babie Charlie!" said the jester, "I didna expect this from you, my sweet bairn. When I trusted you to gang to Spain to fetch the Infanta, I was sair troubled at heart, as ye ken, but I didna think ye wad disobey my injunctions."

"How?" exclaimed Charles.

"Hear what I have to say to ye, sir, and dinna interrupt me," cried Archie. "In trustin' you to the court of Spain, I knew fu' weel the dangers awaitin' you, but I didna expect ye wad voluntarily thrust your neck into the noose. I didna think ye wad give a private audience to a Romish priest, whose sole aim is to bring ye over to his idolatrous faith. I little thought ye wad listen to him, and send him away gleeful and triumphant.

But I canna believe he has prevailed wi' ye—I canna believe ye hae fallen."

"Peace, sirrah!" cried Charles, sharply.

"Is that the way ye address your auld dad, ye graceless and ungrateful bairn?" said Archie, in a reproachful tone—"bid him haud his tongue when he gies ye guid counsel. If ye shut your ears, ye are lost. Resist the wiles of these priests, I tell you, and listen to the discourses of the twa devout chaplains I have sent ye, Doctors Man and Wren. Ye will also hear the truth frae my gossip, Archie, who, though he wears a fule's cap, is a wise and discreet man, and a determined foe to papistry. Listen to Archie, my bairn—listen to Archie!"

"I have listened to him too long," remarked Charles, unable to repress a smile.

"Not a whit," said the jester, gravely. "You should listen to all that Archie has to say. He kens how loth I was to let ye depart—how miserable I have been lest any mischance should befa'

ye—how I hae dreaded the blandishments of these Romish priests. Archie can explain my feelings towards you as weel as I could do myself. He will warn you, if necessary. Ah! Babie Charlie, oft and oft have I said to Archie, 'My son had better come back without his bonnie bride than make any bargain wi' the Church of Rome.'"

"And what leads thee to imagine that I have made any such bargain, sirrah?" said Charles.

"The exulting grin that lighted up the features of the crafty carl who has just left the cabinet," replied Archie. "He misdoubts not that he has produced an impression upon you."

At this moment the Duke of Buckingham entered the cabinet, magnificently attired as usual, and seated himself without ceremony at the table beside the prince.

"I have just been receiving a lecture, Geordie," said Charles, laughing.

"A lecture!—from whom?" cried the duke.

"Frae me—frae yer auld dad and gossip, Steenie," said Archie, once more mimicking the voice and gestures of James. "I hae spoken to Babie Charlie, and now I hae a word to say to you. Didna ye promise me to take every care of my son? Didna ye engage to guard him frae a' dangers? Ye canna deny it. Aweel! He canna be in worse danger than he is at this moment."

"What means the knave?" cried Buckingham, glancing at the prince.

"My meaning will be plain to ye, Steenie, if ye will but listen," said Archie. "Efforts are being made to lure Babie Charlie frae his faith. A Romish priest has just been closeted wi' him, and has gone away wi' the smile of triumph on his lip, thinking he has convinced my son. Is this the way ye fulfil your promises to me, Steenie? Is this the care ye take of my bairn?"

"By my soul!" cried Buckingham, "if there be any truth in this statement, I deserve the knave's

reproaches. Is it possible that your highness has had an interview with a Romish priest?"

"Padre Ambrosio, the Infanta's confessor, has just been with me," replied Charles, gravely, "and we have been discussing points of faith. He is a man of learning and ability, and I listened to him with pleasure. I have no doubt he persuaded himself that he had produced a certain impression upon me. I allowed him to depart with that conviction."

"He must be quickly undeceived," cried Buckingham, rising. "Be that my business."

"Calm yourself, Geordie, and sit down," cried Charles. "I had a motive for thus throwing dust into the confessor's eyes. He can enable me to see the Infanta when I please."

"That is possible," rejoined the duke, "but you will purchase the privilege too dearly. Padre Ambrosio is an agent of the Nuncio. Intelligence will be immediately despatched to the Pope that your

highness's conversion is probable, and the dispensation will be delayed in anticipation of that event. Now that you have held out hopes, nothing less will content them. You have undone all we have been labouring to accomplish. But I must try to set it right."

"Be not hasty, Geordie, or you will mar my project."

At this moment an usher entered, and announced his excellency the Conde-Duque M. Olivarez.

"The very person I desired to see," cried Buckingham.

"Do not offend him, Geordie, I conjure you—I command you," cried Charles.

As Olivarez entered, Graham and the jester retired.

VIII.

OF THE ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED BY OLIVAREZ TO INDUCE CHARLES TO BECOME A CONVERT.

"He *has* seen Padre Ambrosio," muttered Buckingham, watching the minister as he made a profound obeisance to the prince.

As Olivarez bowed to him, he returned the salutation somewhat haughtily.

"I am glad to find you here, my lord duke," said Olivarez, without noticing the slight, "because I wish you to hear what I have to say to his highness. I have reason to believe," he pursued, turning to Charles, "that since your highness has been

in this most Catholic country, and has had an opportunity of witnessing the rites of that faith, a change has taken place in your sentiments, and that at no distant date we may hope to receive you into the pale of our Church. If these expectations should be realised, and your highness should happily be induced to return to the faith of your fathers, it will be a source of the highest gratification to the king my master, and will at once remove all obstacles to your union with the Infanta."

"Were the prince to take such a step, he would never be King of England," said Buckingham. "His subjects would rise in rebellion against him."

"I do not think so," replied Olivarez, "because I believe the Catholic party to be still strong in England. But if there should be a rebellion, Spain will lend him her armies and navies to quell it."

"If the prince can listen calmly to such a proposition, my lord, it is more than I can," cried Buckingham.

"Pardon me, my lord duke," said Olivarez, "I addressed myself to the prince. I beg your highness will not allow any fears of the consequences to deter you from taking this step. United as they would be under such circumstances, England and Spain might defy the world. It is not only to your spiritual, but to your temporal advantage, that you should embrace the faith of Rome. England is divided into sects, which the want of energy on the part of your royal father is allowing to grow into dangerous importance. You must crush them with an iron arm. You must annihilate puritanism, or it will overthrow the monarchy. You must have but one religion, and that the religion of Rome. You must extirpate heresy by the same means that it has been extirpated here. Thus you will become a far more powerful sovereign than the king your father. Your throne will be secure. Blessed with the Infanta, strictly allied to Spain, I trust your reign will be long and glorious."

"I will weigh what your excellency has said," observed Charles.

"I beseech your highness to do so," replied Olivarez. "And if you desire to confer with any of our churchmen, they shall attend upon you. They would be delighted to assist in so good a work."

"I thank your excellency, but I do not need their aid," replied Charles. "When I have arrived at a decision, I will let you know."

"Heaven enlighten your heart, and enable you to pursue your purpose!" cried Olivarez. "I shall await your decision with impatience, and so will the king."

"Not a word to his majesty at present, I pray your excellency," said Charles.

"Your highness's request shall be observed," said Olivarez, bowing, and preparing to depart.

"Hold! my lord," cried Buckingham. "I cannot for a moment believe that the prince seriously

entertains any design of abandoning the Protestant faith and adopting that of Rome, but be assured, it if it should be so, I will most strenuously oppose it."

"I count upon your opposition, my lord duke," rejoined Olivarez; "but I persuade myself I have convinced his highness of the policy of the step, and he will, I trust, adopt it."

"Indulge no such hope, my lord," said Buckingham. "I can prevent him from doing so—and I will."

"Aha! what is this I hear?" cried Olivarez. "Are you the prince's master, my lord duke?"

"I am the representative of his august father," replied Buckingham. "He must listen to my remonstrances."

"That remains to be seen," replied Olivarez. And with a profound bow to Charles he quitted the cabinet.

"What means this, prince?" cried Buckingham,

as soon as he was gone. "If you have formed any such fatal resolution—for fatal it would be—I must enjoin, in your royal father's name, your immediate return to England—with or without the Infanta."

"Do not alarm yourself, Geordie," rejoined Charles, laughing. "There is no danger of my turning Papist. This is a mere ruse. I thought you would see through it."

"See through it! Not I!" cried the duke. "You played the dissembler so well, that you completely imposed upon me. But what is your motive for thus deluding Padre Ambrosio and Olivarez?"

"My motive ought to be obvious to you. It is to baffle their designs. Hitherto, as you know, they have secretly opposed my union with the Infanta. Now they will promote it."

"But they will be more bitterly opposed to it than ever, when they find out that they have been duped," said the duke.

"At all events, a temporary advantage will be gained, and that is something," observed Charles.

"Thank Heaven I have had no part in the scheme, for I cannot approve of it," remarked Buckingham.

"You will have to play a very important part in it, Geordie, before I have done," rejoined Charles. "But come with me. I am about to drive to the House of Seven Chimneys. I must see my chaplains, Doctors Man and Wren, and let them know how I have duped Olivarez."

"If you are going to call on Bristol, I pray your highness to excuse me," said Buckingham.

"Nay, I will take no excuse," said Charles. "I must reconcile your differences with Bristol."

"Reconciliation between us is impossible," said Buckingham. "I hate him too deeply to affect to be on friendly terms with him. However, I am ready to attend your highness."

Charles then quitted the cabinet, and traversing

the grand gallery, where the tumult instantly ceased on his appearance, proceeded to the great court. Entering one of the royal carriages with Buckingham, he desired to be driven to the House of Seven Chimneys.

IX.

THE ROYAL BULL-FIGHT IN THE PLAZA MAYOR.

At length the long-looked-for day arrived on which the grand national spectacle of a bull-fight was to be offered by the king to his royal visitor. As the exhibition was to be conducted on a magnificent scale, and as the circus ordinarily devoted to such shows was insufficient to contain a tithe of the persons who desired to witness it, it was resolved to construct an amphitheatre in the Plaza Mayor, which should almost rival the Coliseum at Rome in its enormous size.

The Plaza Mayor, by far the largest square in Madrid, was of very recent construction at the period of our history, having only been completed about four years previously—namely, in 1619—in the reign of Philip III., by Juan Gomez de Mora. To make way for this immense plaza, the architect had to remove many ancient habitations, the site having been chosen in the most crowded part of the city, though at no great distance from the royal palace—but the result was to give to Madrid one of the largest and most superb squares in Europe. The four façades of the plaza are surrounded by porticos, the lofty and elegant pillars of which support the upper stories of the habitations. The architecture of these houses is uniform and of a noble character, and stately archways open upon the streets by which the plaza is approached.

From the period of its construction to the present time, the Plaza Mayor, so well adapted by its size and situation for such exhibitions, has been the scene

of some of the most striking public ceremonials enacted in Madrid. In this vast area, in the presence of the sovereign and the court and of two-thirds of the entire population, which can easily be there congregated, tournaments on the grandest scale have been held, masques, fêtes, and bull-fights have been displayed, while spectacles of a more lugubrious character have also been there performed. In the midst of the Plaza Mayor the scaffold has often been erected and dyed with the noblest blood of Castile, and the fires of the terrible auto-da-fé have frequently been lighted. Thousands of victims to the merciless Inquisition have there perished.

The extensive preparations for the spectacle to be presented to the prince had occupied some time. The whole of the plaza was unpaved, and in the centre an immense amphitheatre was constructed, with seats rising by gradations to the height of the lower balconies of the surrounding

habitations, and capable of accommodating an incredible number of spectators. Covered with crimson cloth, and otherwise ornamented, these seats presented a very splendid appearance, and were so arranged that each occupant could command a perfect view of the performance. The arena destined for the courses was deeply sanded, and was surrounded by double barriers, between which ran a circular passage. There were two grand entrances to the arena, and a gate, with folding-doors painted red, which communicated with the toril, or dens where the bulls were shut up.

The day dawned most auspiciously. The sun shone brightly, the bells rang joyously, martial music was heard, and bands of mounted archers and arquebusiers in their glittering accoutrements were seen proceeding from the palace to the Plaza Mayor, and though it was certain that the heat would be excessive, no one cared for that inconvenience, provided they could obtain a sight of

the grand spectacle. Thousands of manolos and manolas in their gayest attire trooped off to the scene of the approaching show. Vehicles of all kinds thronged the streets, and gaily-dressed majos, mounted on Andalusian horses, and having their majas seated behind them, forced their way through the crowd of foot passengers. Through the different gates countrymen, bestriding gaily-caparisoned mules, rode into the city, each having a carbine or a trabuco at his saddle-bow. From the Calle Mayor, from the Calle de Toledo, from the Calle de Atocha, living streams poured into the Plaza Mayor, so that even at an early hour the square was filled to overflowing.

Towards noon, when every seat in the immense amphitheatre was occupied by cavaliers in velvet mantles of varied hues, or by lovely dames habited on this occasion in honour of the prince in white silk, and draped in white mantillas of the richest lace; when nothing was seen but the fluttering of

plumes and the waving of fans; when every balcony of every house in each of the four façades was occupied by spectators; when roofs and chimneys were invaded, and no point or pinnacle commanding a view was neglected—the coup d'œil of the plaza was magnificent in the extreme. More than a hundred thousand spectators were present, and as all the male portion of the crowd was dressed in lively colours, the effect was very striking. All the balconies were decorated—generally with velvets of various hues, arras, or carpets, but in some cases with cloth of gold and silver—and these decorations added prodigiously to the effect.

The grand ornament of the plaza, however, and that on which the universal gaze rested, was a magnificent gilt scaffold reared over the arches of the Panaderia, and covered with cloth of gold and silver. This scaffold was divided into several partitions, separated from each other by hangings of crimson damask spotted with silver. The central

gallery, reserved for the royal family, was covered in front with cloth of gold, embroidered with the royal arms of Castile and Aragon. On either side were hangings of carnation-coloured cloth of Florence woven with gold, and overhead was a canopy formed of crimson cloth of gold of Milan, very gorgeous to behold. The fauteuils and tabourets were covered with cloth of gold and tissue, and the cushions were of the same rich stuff.

The tribune on the right of the royal gallery was assigned to the ambassadors, and the principal seat in it was occupied by the Papal Nuncio. With him were the Earl of Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, and the ambassadors of the Emperor Ferdinand II., of France, Poland, and Venice. In the tribune on the left sat Don Juan de Castilla, the corregidor of Madrid, and the three regidores. On this occasion, besides his usual train of officers, the corregidor was attended by eight pages and

four lacqueys in doublets of black satin guarded with black lace, black velvet cloaks embroidered with silver caracols and gandurados, and hats adorned with black and white plumes. Next was a gallery appointed for the members of the different councils—the royal councils of Castile and Aragon sitting in front. Farther on, in the balconies, were stationed the chief grandees and highest dames of the court.

All the important personages to whom we have referred had taken their places in the tribunes, every balcony in each of the façades was thronged, and presented a most gorgeous show, every seat in the amphitheatre was occupied, the whole of the vast plaza was encumbered with gentlemen, pages, and lacqueys, clad in the sumptuous liveries of their lords, and by spectators of inferior degree, but in very gay attire, when the first royal carriage arrived at the entrance of the Panaderia. It contained the queen, the Infanta, and the In-

fantes, Don Carlos and Don Fernando. Her majesty was dressed in ash-coloured silk, richly embroidered, and adorned with plates of gold, and wore a profusion of jewels. As at all public ceremonials, the Infanta appeared in her royal suitor's colours, her dress being of white satin ornamented with pearls. Don Carlos was attired in black velvet, and Don Fernando in purple.

The royal party were received by the Conde de Puebla, attended by a host of pages in liveries of orange-coloured velvet embroidered with silver lace, and were ceremoniously conducted to the gallery appointed for them, at the door of which stood Don Alfonse Eurigues and the Conde de Benavente, with other grandees. As the two royal personages came forward, attended by their train, their appearance was greeted by enthusiastic acclamations from the beholders.

The next person to enter the royal gallery was the Countess de Olivarez, and shortly afterwards a

charming background was formed by the meninos and meninas, who looked like a parterre of flowers in their white and carnation-coloured satin dresses.

Scarcely had the queen and the Infanta taken their places, when fanfares of trumpets, which made the whole plaza resound, announced the arrival of the king and his royal guest.

Philip and Charles had ridden from the palace, and were attended by a guard of superbly-equipped Burgundian archers. Arrayed in black velvet, and wearing black plumes in his hat, the king rode a cream-coloured Andalusian courser. Charles was attired in white satin, embroidered with gold, and his hat was adorned with black and white plumes. He rode the barb given him by the Duke de Cea. On their arrival at the Plaza Mayor they were received by the Conde de Olivarez and the Duke of Buckingham, attended by a large retinue composed of Spanish and English nobles, all on horseback, and were

conducted to the arena. As grand master of the horse, the marshalling of the royal fête devolved upon Olivarez, but he had courteously surrendered the post to Buckingham, and contented himself with acting as the duke's assistant.

After saluting the queen and the Infanta, who had advanced to the front of the royal gallery to watch them, the king and the prince then rode slowly round the arena, and as they pursued their course, Philip explained all the arrangements to his guest, pointed out the different gates in the barriers, and showed him the entrance to the toril.

Having made the circuit of the arena, they came to a halt, and took up a position exactly opposite the royal gallery. Charles then looked around, and was astonished at the spectacle that met his gaze. Never had he beheld so vast an assemblage —never had he witnessed such an extraordinary manifestation of enthusiasm. The whole place was in a state of excitement. From every row in the

enormous amphitheatre, from every balcony in the plaza, from every window, scarfs, kerchiefs, and hats were waved. "Viva el Principe de Galles!" resounded on all sides.

Long before these demonstrations had subsided, the performers in the spectacle began to arrive.

The first to enter the arena was the Duke de Cea. He was mounted on a strong iron-grey charger, and was habited in black velvet, edged with silver of goldsmith's work. The young duke was accompanied by Sir Richard Graham and Don Antonio Guino, both of whom were mounted on powerful horses, and wore doublets and hose of tawny velvet, embroidered with silver lace, having great tawny plumes in their hats. De Cea was preceded by fifty lacqueys in white and tawny hose, tawny doublets and cloaks, caps of wrought silver, and swords with silver scabbards.

Having made the circuit of the arena, and bent before the occupants of the royal gallery, De Cea

and his two friends bowed reverentially to the king and prince, and then took up a position behind them. While the young duke's lacqueys went out, a hundred others entered. The new comers were attired in white cloth, laced with silver, and wore black caps with white plumes. They formed part of the retinue of the Marquis de Velada, who rode into the ring with Don Pedro de Montezuma and the Duke de Maqueda. Having pursued the same course as De Cea and his friends, these personages stationed themselves behind the king and prince.

Next entered fifty lacqueys in white satin, guarded with branches of azure silk and gold. They preceded the Conde de Villamor, who was mounted on a magnificent chesnut horse — the mane and tail of the noble animal being twisted with silver. Villamor was accompanied by Don Gaspar Bonifaz and Don Christobal de Gavina.

These cavaliers having taken up their posi-

tion, fifty more lacqueys appeared in dark green doublets, embroidered with silver caracols, having black hats and plumes. This troop belonged to Don Geronimo de Medanilla, who was accompanied by the Conde de Cantillana and Don Diego Zurate.

More lacqueys followed in liveries equally gorgeous—more cavaliers made the circuit of the arena, and took up their position with the others —until at last the number of combatants was complete.

The inspection over, Philip and Charles quitted the arena, dismounted at the entrance of the Panaderia, and shortly afterwards appeared in the royal gallery, where Charles was assigned a place between the queen and the Infanta.

No sooner had the king and the prince taken their seats, than trumpets were sounded, and the whole troop of cavaliers, who remained in the ring, formed themselves into two lines, and, mar-

shalled by Buckingham and Olivarez, rode towards the royal tribune, saluted the king, and then quitting the arena, drew up in an enclosure reserved for them outside the barriers.

Another procession now entered the arena by an opposite gate. At its head rode four alguacils, mounted on strong black horses, and accoutred in black doublets and cloaks, large funnel-topped boots, and broad-leaved sombreros with black plumes. They were followed by a large troop of toreros, chulos, and banderilleros.

All the latter were young men, somewhat short of stature, but remarkably well formed, and their light active figures were displayed to the utmost advantage in gaily-embroidered doublets, fashioned in blue, rose, or green silk, flesh-coloured silk hose worked with silver, and pink satin shoes adorned with large roses. Their long black locks, taken from the brow, were fastened in a knot at the back of the neck and secured by a silken net.

A small black montera hat, ornamented with spangles and tinsel, completed their costume. The chulos, whose business it was to irritate and distract the bulls, carried under their arms capas or mantles of various-coloured stuffs. The procession was closed by a sort of hurdle, dragged along by four mules, decorated with crimson tufts and plumes, and having bells attached to their harness. This equipage was destined to remove the carcases of the horses and bulls killed in the courses.

The procession having paid homage to the king by kneeling before the royal gallery, passed on, and the greater part went out and stationed themselves in the partition between the barriers. A dozen chulos, half as many banderilleros, and a single torero, were left in the ring.

Again the trumpets sounded, and three cavaliers, each armed with a lance, rode into the arena. These were the Duke de Cea, Don Antonio Guino, and Sir Richard Graham. They

posted themselves on the right of the toril, which faced the royal gallery, at intervals of twenty yards from each other, the young duke being nearest the toril, and Graham farthest from it.

While these dispositions were made, the vast assemblage became perfectly silent. Expectation was so highly raised that scarcely a breath was drawn.

Amid the silence, the alguacils rode towards the tribune occupied by the corregidor, and, baring their heads, besought permission to open the toril.

In response, a large key, ornamented by ribands, was flung to them by Don Juan de Castilla. It was caught in a hat, and delivered to a varlet of the ring, who ran with it towards the toril, while the alguacils galloped out of the arena as fast as they could, amid the shouts and jeers of the beholders.

Trumpets were then blown, the red gates of the toril were thrown wide open, and quick as lightning a bull rushed forth. At the moment

of his entrance a little flag was planted in his shoulder, bearing the device of the Duke de Cea. He was a splendid animal brought from Andalusia, where the best bulls are bred, and soon gave proof of courage and activity. His colour was a shining black; his horns sharp and crescent-shaped; his eyes fierce and wild in expression. For a moment he seemed bewildered by the shouts that greeted his appearance, and the thousands of faces that met his gaze, but after a short hesitation, during which he bellowed savagely, and lashed his sides with his tail, he precipitated himself on De Cea, who, lance in hand, awaited his attack.

At a bull-fight of the present day, the horse of the picador, generally a wretched animal destined to the knacker if he should survive the conflict, has a thick bandage over the eyes to prevent him from perceiving the onset of the bull. Moreover, the picador's legs are sheathed in iron greaves covered with leather. But at the period of which

we write, when nobles and cavaliers were picadors, no such precautions were taken, and as good horses were used in the bull-ring as in the tilt-yard.

Thus De Cea's noble steed, though conscious of his danger, remained motionless until the bull was close upon him, when, obedient to the will of his rider, he turned slightly aside, and the furious brute, missing his mark, rushed on, not, however, unscathed, for he received the point of De Cea's lance deep in his shoulder. The shaft of the lance was broken by the blow, but another weapon was instantly handed by a chulo to the duke, who expected the bull to renew the attack.

Instead of wheeling round, however, the beast went on, and, again couching his head, made a dash at Don Antonio Guino. This time better success attended the charge than had done that on the young duke. Shivering the lance with which Don Antonio struck him, the furious brute gored the horse deeply in the chest, rendering the

animal unmanageable, and while he was struggling with Don Antonio, the bull returned to the attack, and this time plunging his horns into the horse's body near the girths, lifted him and his rider completely from the ground.

This feat was greatly applauded by the spectators, and cries resounded on all sides of "Bravo toro! buen toro! gentil toro!"

Amid these shouts, Don Antonio disengaged himself from his steed, from whom the blood poured forth in torrents, and vaulted over the barriers. At the same time, the chulos advanced towards the bull and fluttered their mantles before him to distract his attention from the fallen steed, on whom he was still venting his rage. His attention being thus diverted, the bull turned to his new opponents, who, having succeeded in drawing him towards the centre of the ring, took to flight, and made for the barriers.

All escaped but one, who slipped and fell, and

his fate seemed certain. A thrill of horror pervaded the assemblage as the bull, who had rushed past him, turned and lowered his blood-stained horns. But deliverance was at hand. Ere the vengeful monster could transfix him, his own side was pierced by the lance of Graham, who had dashed to the assistance of the prostrate chulo. Bellowing savagely, the bull turned upon his new foe, but Graham avoided the attack, and, profiting by the opportunity, the chulo sprang to his feet and cleared the barrier.

Meanwhile, the bull wheeled round and again assaulted Graham, but he had now met with an antagonist whom it seemed impossible to touch. Rapid as were the monster's movements, frequently and furiously as he charged, he did not once succeed in touching Graham, so admirably did the young man manœuvre his steed.

In this manner the bull was conducted to that part of the arena which was nearest to the royal

gallery, when the animal, fatigued by his ineffectual attempts, desisted from further attack, and stood still, staring in angry wonderment at his opponent.

Charmed by the remarkable skill displayed by the young man, the spectators applauded loudly, and a thousand voices called out, "Viva el Caballero Ingles! viva Don Ricardo! viva!"

Apparently indifferent to the bull, Graham bowed in reply to these acclamations. But he had scarcely made the movement, when the bull, who had been stealthily watching him, again made a charge. This time the horns of the brute slightly grazed the side of the horse, who snorted with pain, but remained perfectly under his rider's control.

Thinking the conflict had endured long enough, Graham resolved to put an end to it. With this design, he flung away his lance, and drew his sword. Allowing the bull to make two more charges, he avoided them dexterously, but on the

next assault he plunged his rapier up to the hilt between the animal's shoulders.

Pierced to the heart, with the sword still sticking in his body, and blood mingled with foam gushing from his mouth and nostrils, the bull dropped on his knees before his conqueror.

The whole amphitheatre rung with plaudits, and shouts again resounded on every side of "Viva el Caballero Ingles!"

At that moment of triumph, Graham glanced anxiously round, and at last his eye caught that of Doña Casilda.

The trumpets then sounded the morte, and presently afterwards the four gaily-caparisoned mules, with the hurdle attached to them, galloped into the arena, their bells jingling merrily, and bore off the carcase of the bull.

While this took place, De Cea rode up to his friend, and warmly congratulated him on his brilliant achievement.

"You have begun well, amigo," cried the young duke.

"Oh, this is nothing. I hope to do better,' rejoined Graham. "We must have another bull."

"You must control your ardour for a while," laughed De Cea. "The next course belongs to the Conde de Villamor. But perhaps he will let us join him. If so, we will have a couple of bulls. Here he comes. I will ask him," he added, as Villamor, accompanied by Don Gaspar Bonifaz and Don Christobal, rode into the arena.

X.

THE SECOND COURSE.

From the moment of Graham's entrance into the arena to that when the bull dropped at his feet, he had been anxiously watched by Doña Casilda, who was seated in a balcony of the amphitheatre, on the right of the toril. With her were the Conde de Saldana, Doña Flor, and Don Pompeo. In the same balcony, immediately behind her young mistress, sat Rose, who, being attired in black silk, draped in a mantilla, and provided with a fan, looked like a Spanish don-

cella. Throughout the course, Rose's dark eyes had been fixed upon Graham, and she followed his every movement with an interest quite as keen as that felt by Doña Casilda.

With the exception of Don Pompeo, all the party were in raptures at the address displayed by Graham, and the conde was loud in his praises.

"I can scarcely believe this is the first time Don Ricardo has encountered a bull," he said. "He has all the skill and coolness of an experienced picador."

"The Duke de Cea must have taken great pains with him," remarked Doña Flor.

"I think he is quite as skilful as the duke," said Casilda.

"That is not saying much in his praise," rejoined Don Pompeo. "De Cea did nothing in the course we have just witnessed."

"We shall see what he does in the next," observed Doña Flor.

"Is Don Ricardo about to take part in the next course?" asked Casilda, eagerly.

"So it appears," replied Don Pompeo. "He and De Cea seem loth to leave the ring." And he muttered, "May they never quit it with life!"

While this ill wish was breathed, Doña Casilda detached a knot of ribands from her breast, and, giving it to Rose, said, in an under tone,

"Let this be conveyed instantly to Don Ricardo. Say it comes from me."

"The señora shall be obeyed," replied Rose.

And quickly descending to the barriers, she addressed herself to a chulo, who took the breast-knot, and, vaulting into the ring, hastened towards Graham.

Meanwhile, the arena had been prepared for a second course. As soon as the bull had been disposed of, the mules returned with their equipage, and carried off Don Antonio Guino's horse, which by this time was dead. A torero also brought

back the sword with which Graham had despatched the bull, and delivered it to its owner. At the same time all evidences of the recent conflict were carefully obliterated by the varlets of the ring.

On learning from De Cea that he and Graham desired to join in the second course, the Conde de Villamor at once courteously assented, but it being necessary to ask permission of the corregidor, a messenger was despatched to ascertain the pleasure of that important personage; and it was during this interval, and while the five cavaliers were drawn up opposite the corregidor's tribune, that the chulo ran towards Graham, and, holding out the breast-knot to him, exclaimed:

"Hist! Señor don Ricardo!—this favour is from Doña Casilda."

"From Doña Casilda! Then it must be for me," cried Don Christobal, snatching the breast-knot from the chulo.

"Nay, señor, I am certain it was meant for the

English caballero," cried the chulo. "The doncella told me so."

"Concern yourself no further, friend," rejoined Don Christobal, sternly. "I am Doña Casilda's betrothed."

On this, the chulo retired.

"The favour was unquestionably intended for me, señor," said Graham to Don Christobal. "You will not be uncourteous enough to detain it."

Don Christobal made no reply, but proceeded to fasten the breast-knot on his doublet.

At this juncture, the corregidor, to whom the message had just been delivered, advanced to the front of his tribune, and bowed to the group of cavaliers, to intimate that he assented to their request. The five champions immediately dispersed themselves, each taking up a position close to the inner barrier.

Though burning with indignation, Graham was obliged to constrain himself for the moment, but he

promised himself speedy revenge. As he glanced towards the balcony where Casilda was seated, he perceived from her looks that she was aware of what had occurred, and his rage was increased by the smile of triumph that curled Don Christobal's lips.

"He shall not wear that breast-knot long," he thought.

Meantime, the trumpets again sounded, the gates of the toril were thrown open, and a second bull dashed into the arena.

Like his predecessor, he was for a moment blinded by the flood of sunshine that burst upon him, and stopped, bewildered by the shouts and by the presence of so many spectators. He was a powerful-looking beast, dun in colour, with sharp white horns, tipped with black, and bent upwards. His mouth was covered with foam, and his eyes flashed fire.

After gazing round the ring and bellowing

furiously, the bull hurled himself on the Conde de Villamor, who stood nearest him on the left. Villamor avoided the charge, and pierced him in the shoulder with his lance, but the wound only served to irritate him, for he returned to the attack with such celerity, that the conde found it impossible to get out of the way, and, before he could draw his sword, the bull was upon him.

Down went horse and man, overthrown by the terrible shock, and for a moment the conde seemed in great danger, as his steed had fallen upon him, and he could not extricate himself.

An immense cry rose from the assemblage, mingled with some shouts of "Bravo toro!"

Luckily for Villamor, the bull expended his fury upon the horse, plunging his horns repeatedly into the prostrate animal, and while the vengeful beast was thus engaged, a troop of chulos came up, and by fluttering their capas, soon succeeded in luring him towards the centre of the ring.

As soon as the bull was gone, some of the assistants leaped over the inner barrier and assisted Villamor to rise. On regaining his feet he called for another horse, but at that very moment his strength deserted him, and but for assistance he must have fallen. While he was being carried out of the arena, the bull caught sight of him, and immediately quitting the chulos, who strove in vain to arrest him, dashed at the party. Scared by the animal's approach, the men left the conde and fled.

A cry of horror arose from the assemblage, who thought that Villamor was lost. Even the king manifested the greatest anxiety. But swift as was the bull, De Cea was swifter. As the animal, with lowered horns, and vengeance in his flaming eye, was within a yard of Villamor, who was lying prostrate on the ground, the lance of the young duke smote him deeply on the shoulder. The bull then wheeled round and turned his rage on his new

assailant, and while he was thus engaged, Villamor was carried safely out of the arena, to the great relief of the beholders.

All eyes were now fixed upon De Cea, who, by executing several rapid voltes and demi-voltes, avoided the furious charges of the bull, and in this manner led the animal to that part of the arena nearest the royal gallery.

At this moment, in obedience to the corregidor, who waved his kerchief from his tribune, the trumpets were sounded, the gates of the toril again flew open, and a third bull came instantly forth, bearing between his shoulders a little flag marked with the device of Don Christobal.

The animal's appearance excited high expectations. In colour he was of a reddish brown, with well-set horns sharp as poniards, eyes that burnt like flaming coals, a curled foretop, and an immense dewlap. Lashing himself with his tail, and pawing the ground, he bellowed fiercely.

The roar made his presence known to the bull on the opposite side of the ring, who instantly answered by a similar note of defiance, and the twain would have rushed at each other if they had not been prevented.

Aided by some of the chulos, De Cea kept his bull in check, and held in play as before, while the toro roxo, as he was styled by the spectators, found his course barred by the three picadors. Despising these obstacles, however, he dashed against Don Christobal, who was nearest to him, and, regardless of the wound he received, went on, and assailed Don Gaspar Bonifaz, from whom he got a second thrust in the shoulder. Then, abandoning his original design of seeking out the other bull, he wheeled round with inconceivable rapidity, and again dashed at Don Gaspar, ripping up the side of the horse, and wounding the cavalier himself in the thigh.

But this was not all. Without a pause in his

furious career, he turned his horns upon Don Christobal, and in another moment horse and rider were rolling upon the ground.

Graham saw what had occurred. Had he waited for another moment, the horns of the infuriated monster would have delivered him from his rival. But a nobler impulse swayed him. Without hesitation he charged the bull, whose head was lowered to strike Don Christobal, and smote the savage brute between the shoulders with such force that more than a third of the lance disappeared, while the bull, who had received his death-wound, fell within a foot of the horse he had slain.

Thunders of applause greeted this gallant action. The spectators appeared frenzied with delight. "Viva el Caballero Ingles! Viva Don Ricardo! Viva!" again resounded on all sides. As the hero of the moment glanced towards the balcony, where the mistress of his heart was seated, she waved her

kerchief enthusiastically to him, and that was reward enough for his prowess.

Meanwhile, a troop of chulos had flown to Don Christobal's assistance, but before they came up he had extricated himself from his horse. His first business was to proffer thanks to his deliverer, but he did so with an ill grace, and could not conceal his mortification.

"I owe my life to you, Don Ricardo," he said, "and must try to pay off the debt, if I can."

"Give me that breast-knot of ribands, and I shall be satisfied. You can pay it off at once," rejoined Graham.

"We are quits, then," said Don Christobal, detaching the ornament from his doublet, and presenting it to his rival.

Glancing towards the balcony where Casilda was seated, Graham saw she was watching him, and pressing the favour to his lips, he fastened it on his breast.

Just at this moment a torero came up, bearing a small flag which he had just unhooked from the neck of the bull.

"This trophy belongs to you, Señor Don Ricardo," he said to Graham. "Is there any lady present to whom you desire to send it? If so, I will see it conveyed to her."

"I thank you for your courtesy, friend," replied Graham, to whom the torero's features seemed familiar. "The lady to whom I would present it is seated in yonder balcony, on the left of the toril."

"I see," replied the torero, glancing in the direction pointed out. "It is Doña Casilda, daughter of the Conde de Saldana. She is looking towards us, and understands your design. The flag shall be sent to her at once."

He then bowed towards the balcony, so as to intimate his intention to Doña Casilda, and was about to depart, when Graham stopped him.

"Stay, friend," he said. "Methinks we have met before."

"True, señor," replied the torero, bowing; "we *have* met before—in the Somosierra."

"Ha! is it possible?" exclaimed Graham, a light suddenly flashing upon him.

The torero, however, did not tarry for further questioning, but ran to the barriers, where he quickly found a page, who at once mounted to the balcony.

"From Don Ricardo, señora," said the page, as he delivered the trophy to Doña Casilda.

"From Don Christobal you mean," remarked Don Pompeo. "The flag bears his device."

"That may be, señor," replied the page, "but it was the English caballero who killed the bull. The flag, therefore, belongs to him, and he has sent it to the señora."

"I am much beholden to Don Ricardo, and to you for bringing it," said Casilda, smiling with pride and pleasure.

His errand fulfilled, the page bowed and departed.

"You should not have accepted the flag, Casilda," remarked Don Pompeo. "Don Christobal will be offended, and with good reason. Such a mark of attention from Don Ricardo is highly improper. All eyes are upon you, and the incident is sure to be commented upon, and to Don Christobal's disadvantage. I advise you to throw the flag away."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied Casilda. "Don Christobal deserves to be mortified for his want of skill. He has allowed a mere novice to eclipse him. But for Don Ricardo, he would have been killed."

"Perhaps you would not have been sorry if he had," remarked Don Pompeo, spitefully.

At this moment a great shout from the spectators announced that De Cea had just despatched the other bull. Doña Flor was enchanted, and ap-

plauded enthusiastically, much to her husband's annoyance. But his ill humour was increased when, shortly afterwards, the page reappeared, bringing a bunch of blue and red ribands, taken from the neck of the bull which had just been slain, and presented it to Doña Flor.

"From the Duke de Cea," said the page.

"I thank him for his attention," she replied, with a gracious smile. "I have now got my trophy," she added, turning to Casilda.

"You do not mean to wear it," whispered the other. "Don Pompeo looks as black as thunder."

"If he chooses to make himself ridiculous in public I cannot help it," returned Doña Flor. "I shall not be deterred by his cross looks from wearing the token."

The course being ended, the Duke de Cea and Graham left the ring to other champions. As they rode forth together, they paused for a mo-

ment, and bowed gracefully to the balcony, in which Doña Flor and her sister were seated.

The acclamations that attended Graham's departure showed how highly his skill and gallantry were appreciated by the spectators.

XI.

HOW ARCHIE WAS TOSSED BY A BULL.

MEANWHILE, preparations were expeditiously made for another course. The dead bulls and horses were carried off by the mules as before, and the marks of the conflict effaced. The only one of the champions left in the ring who had figured in the last encounter, was Don Christobal. He had been provided with a fresh horse, and seemed eager to efface his late defeat. The three picadors who joined him in the arena were the Marquis de Velada, Don Pedro de Montezuma, and the Duke de Maqueda.

As soon as the champions had posted themselves, the trumpets sounded, and a bull rushed forth, successively assailing Velada and Montezuma, and receiving thrusts from both. In the third assault he was slain by Don Christobal, who thus redeemed his credit, and gained the applauses he so eagerly coveted.

Quickly was the carcase removed—quickly came another bull into the arena. But the new comer not evincing an immediate disposition to attack the picadors, he was drawn to the centre of the ring by the chulos, and there his fury was roused to the proper pitch by the banderilleros, who planted their rustling darts in his shoulders.

Among the troop engaged with the bull was one personage who had no previous experience of such performances, but who trusted, nevertheless, to his activity to extricate himself from peril. This was Archie, the court fool. He had so earnestly besought Buckingham to allow him to enter the

arena, that the duke consented, though with considerable reluctance.

Archie's motley garb, which presented a striking contrast to the gay and glittering attire of the chulos, drew immediate attention to him, and the movements of his grotesque little figure were watched with lively curiosity by the spectators, who were much diverted by his appearance and manner. Even the occupants of the royal gallery watched him. Charles had first remarked him, and called the king's attention to him, and some uneasiness was felt for his safety. Archie had been provided with a crimson capa, which he fluttered in the eyes of the bull, and up to a certain time no misadventure befel him. But after the fury of the bull had been thoroughly roused by the banderilleros, matters began to assume a different complexion, and being warned by his companions, Archie thought it prudent to take to his heels. Unluckily, the bull, after dispersing his

other tormentors, who also took to flight, turned, and perceiving the flying jester, dashed after him.

It now became a question whether Archie could reach the barrier before his swift and terrible foe could come up with him. So headlong was the dash of the bull that escape seemed barely possible. Charles gave up the jester for lost, and thought how deeply King James would regret him.

However, Archie went on. A few more paces and he would be safe. The barrier was close at hand. The shouts of the spectators, encouraging him to go on, rang in his ears. But above these shouts he heard the bull, who was now close upon him. He made a desperate spring forward, but failed to reach the barrier, and fell.

A universal thrill of horror pervaded the spectators as the bull lowered his head. Nowhere was this feeling experienced in a higher degree than in the royal gallery. The next moment the jester

was tossed to a great height in the air, and all who looked on expected, on his descent, to see him transfixed by the sharp-pointed horns waiting to receive him.

But he was not destined to perish thus miserably. Succour arrived at that supreme moment. A capa flung by a dexterous hand over the head of the bull caused him to turn his head, and the movement saved the jester, who alighted on the ground without any material injury, for the bull, in tossing him, had luckily not touched him with his horns. So little, indeed, was he hurt, that before the bull could shake the capa from his head Archie had vaulted over the barrier.

A general shout hailed his escape.

XII.

THE MASKED PICADOR.

ATTENTION was then fixed upon the torero to whom Archie had been indebted for preservation. He was a very handsome young man, short of stature, but remarkably well made, and his symmetrical limbs were displayed to the greatest advantage in his glittering garb. His complexion was dark, and his eyes black and keen, and he looked a model of grace and agility. He was, in fact, the person in whom Graham had just before recognised an acquaintance. It being quite evident that he was fully able to cope with the

bull, the Marquis de Velada and Don Pedro, who had ridden to the rescue, held aloof.

As soon as the bull had freed his horns from the capa, and could distinguish his adversary, who was gazing steadily at him at a short distance, he uttered a short angry roar, and prepared for attack. The torero was only armed with a slight rapier, but he was perfectly undismayed. Indeed, he seemed to regard his furious antagonist with contempt. When the bull dashed at him, he stepped nimbly aside, and the enraged animal passed by, but returned almost instantly, making charge after charge, but without the slightest effect. Charmed with the extraordinary grace displayed by the torero, the spectators applauded loudly. At last, at a sign from the corregidor, the conflict was brought to a close. Pierced to the heart by the keen rapier, the bull dropped at his conqueror's feet. Bowing gracefully to the royal gallery, the torero vaulted over the barrier and disappeared.

"Who is that man?" said Philip to the Conde de Puebla, who was standing behind his chair.

"I know not, sire," replied the conde; "but I will inquire, and inform your majesty."

"I shall be glad to learn his name, that I may reward him," remarked Charles. "He has rendered me a great service in rescuing the unlucky jester. Had Archie perished, my royal father would have been inconsolable."

"I will find him out, and let your highness know," said the Conde de Puebla. And he left the gallery for the purpose.

When he returned shortly afterwards, he said, "I am unable at present to satisfy your majesty's curiosity. The torero has disappeared, and no one can tell who he is."

"Strange! his features seem familiar to me," remarked Charles, thoughtfully.

"Make further inquiries, my lord," said Philip. "We must be satisfied."

At this moment, the attention of the royal party was attracted by a singular occurrence. Two bulls had been introduced into the ring, both remarkably active animals. They were aware of each other's presence, but were kept at different sides of the arena by the chulos and banderilleros, who had divided themselves into two parties.

While pursuing the flying bands of their tormentors, both bulls, as if animated by a kindred spirit, leaped the inner barrier almost simultaneously, alighting in the passage which encircled the arena. In addition to the chulos, who had just gained this place of refuge, there were many other persons in the passage at the moment, but all these saved themselves by vaulting into the arena, leaving the space clear for the bulls, who rushed against each other with such prodigious force and fury that both were killed by the shock.

This occurrence, strange and unexpected as it was, only momentarily interrupted the proceedings.

The carcases were removed from the passage, and the arena was cleared for another course.

The champions now occupying the ground were Don Geronimo de Medanilla, the Conde de Cantillana, and Don Diego Zurate. With them was a fourth cavalier, who attracted far more curiosity than his companions, from the circumstance of his features being concealed by a black mask. Everybody wondered who he was, but no one could tell. But be he who he might, it was evident he was a consummate horseman. He was mounted on a black Andalusian barb, which, though full of fire and spirit, obeyed his slightest movement, and he sat his steed with remarkable grace. His small but symmetrical person was attired in white silk, lined with azure and embroidered with silver, and he wore white and blue plumes in his hat. Never had a more graceful cavalier been seen in the bull-ring, and from the moment of his appearance he enlisted all female sympathies in his behalf.

"Who is he?—why is he masked?" resounded on all sides.

But, as we have said, no satisfactory answer could be given to the inquiries. He must be known to the marshals of the fête, or he would not have been allowed entrance into the bull-ring. Not only among the general assemblage, but even in the royal gallery, curiosity was excited as to his name and title, for everybody believed him to be a hidalgo.

"Who is that masked picador?" inquired the king of the Conde de Puebla.

"I am unable to satisfy your majesty at this moment," replied the conde, "but the marshals have just sent word that an explanation will be given at the conclusion of the course."

"Enough. We will wait till then," replied Philip.

The four picadors having posted themselves, the trumpets sounded, and a bull rushed forth from

the toril, singling out Don Geronimo, by whom he was killed. Another bull was then let loose, and another after him. Both these were slain on opposite sides of the arena, and nearly at the same moment—the first by the Conde de Cantillana, and the other by Don Diego Zurate. Don Diego had a narrow escape. The horns of the bull with whom he was engaged, and whom he had smitten on the foretop with his lance, struck the troussequin at the hinder bow of his high Moorish saddle, splitting the wood into shivers, but luckily doing him no injury. A better directed stroke, however, was fatal to the steed, but Don Diego, though dismounted, avenged himself upon his foe.

Hitherto the masked picador had taken little part in the conflict. All he had done was to prick one of the bulls with his lance, as the animal passed him, but he had not stirred from his post. His quietude was so marked, that some of the spectators, who on his appearance had augured great

things of him, set him down as a fainéant cavalier. But others, who judged him more accurately, felt sure he was only biding his time. And so it proved.

While the dead bulls and horses were removed, all the picadors, with one exception, quitted the arena, and the chulos and banderilleros went out. The sole occupant of the ring was now the masked cavalier, and it being seen from these arrangements that he was determined to have no assistance, the resolve at once restored him to the good opinion of the spectators.

As the trumpets sounded he careered round the arena, and tranquilly continued his course even when the bull issued from the toril. A more savage-looking monster could not have been selected. Not one of his predecessors had presented an appearance so formidable. His eyes seemed on flame, and his roar shook the arena. As he remained pawing the ground, bellowing

and lashing his sides, he was a terrible picture. But the cavalier seemed not to heed him, but careered gaily on.

The bull allowed him to make half the circuit of the arena, and then dashed in pursuit. The cavalier had now got the opportunity he desired of displaying the marvellous qualities of his steed. With the greatest apparent ease he eluded every attack of the bull, led him round the ring, suddenly turning when too closely pressed, and in this manner drew him to the centre of the arena, where he compelled him, by his own active movements, to go through an extraordinary series of performances, such as no previous bull had exhibited, and which elicited plaudits from all parts of the amphitheatre.

Despite all his efforts, the bull was unable to touch either horse or rider, though he himself received repeated thrusts on either shoulder. At last, the savage nature of the animal seemed subdued.

Declining to continue the contest, he quitted his opponent, and trotted off to the farther part of the ring, bedewing the sand with gore. Contrary to expectation, the cavalier did not follow him, but called for another bull. In response to the demand the trumpets sounded, and the toril sent forth another combatant. The sight of the new comer reawakened the fury of the dejected bull, and seemed at once to restore his strength and activity.

Answering the roar of defiance, which he supposed to be addressed to him, he prepared for a new conflict. But it was no part of the cavalier's design that the bulls should engage each other. His aim was to draw their joint attack on himself, and in this he completely succeeded, to the infinite surprise and admiration of the beholders, who had never witnessed such a spectacle before, and who rewarded his prowess with thunders of applause. It seemed a miracle that he could escape destruc-

tion from two such active and fierce antagonists, and more than once the spectators gave him up for lost, and thought he was struck. But owing to his address, and the marvellous quickness of his steed, he was never even touched. So hair-breadth were his escapes, that many superstitious persons thought he must possess a charm. The bulls might have thought so too, if they could have reasoned, for he seemed to disappear as they dashed at him. So rapid were his movements, that the closest watchers could scarcely follow them. At one moment the bulls and cavalier seemed heaped together; the next, they were apart. It was an extraordinary sight, and calculated to excite the spectators to the highest pitch. "Bravo! bravo! Viva la Mascara!" resounded on all sides. It was impossible such strife could be of long duration, but how the conflict was to be terminated without mishap to the cavalier, none could conjecture.

The encounter took place in the very centre of

the arena, and was confined to this spot while it lasted. A small circle might have been drawn round the combatants, and this seemed to grow narrower and narrower, until one of the bulls suddenly dropped, pierced to the heart by the lance of the horseman. The other bull did not survive his comrade many seconds, but fell in his turn with a rapier planted between his shoulders. This double victory, achieved with such apparent ease, astounded the beholders, and a perfect hurricane of applause arose. The cavalier, who, as well as his steed, was perfectly uninjured, remained motionless between the carcases of his prostrate foes.

"Unmask! unmask!" cried a thousand voices.

The cavalier complied, flung his mask to the ground, and disclosed the features of a very handsome young man of swarthy complexion.

When the curiosity of the spectators was thus gratified, there was a strange murmur among the crowd, and various exclamations were heard.

At last these confused sounds took a distinct shape, and several voices called out:

"'Tis El Cortejo!"

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon the assemblage by this announcement. A storm of discordant noises arose, but applause soon predominated. Amid all this disturbance, the object of it remained stationary. But he glanced anxiously towards the royal gallery, and as it was evident that he expected some decision thence, all eyes were turned in the same direction. It could then be distinctly perceived that Charles was addressing the king, and it was also quite apparent, from the looks of his majesty, which were ever and anon directed quickly towards El Cortejo, that he formed the subject of the prince's address.

The observers augured well from the king's manner. Little doubt could be entertained that he had assented to the prince's proposition, whatever it might be, and that this related to El Cor-

tejo was equally clear. The profound interest felt in what was going on had calmed down the excitement of the spectators, and a universal silence prevailed.

Meantime, the corregidor had quitted his tribune, and was soon afterwards seen to enter the royal gallery, when he was called forward by the king.

After a short discussion, during which evident reference was made to the solitary occupant of the arena, who composedly awaited his sentence, a sheet of paper and a pen were handed to his majesty, who, without quitting his seat, wrote a few lines and signed them. This done, he gave the order to Charles, who likewise signed it. The corregidor received the document from the prince, and making a profound obeisance, quitted the royal gallery.

When this matter had been disposed of, the king and the prince entered into explanations with the

queen and the Infanta, and the smiling countenances of the party left no doubt as to the decision arrived at. Nevertheless, no one ventured, even by an exclamation, to anticipate the royal decree.

The assemblage, however, was not held long in suspense. Amid loud fanfares of trumpets the corregidor rode into the arena, accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham and the Conde de Olivarez, both of whom were on horseback, and followed by an officer in the royal livery, mounted on a magnificently caparisoned charger. Having advanced to within a short distance of El Cortejo, the corregidor and those with him halted, and the trumpets ceasing their clangour at the same moment, the officer in a loud voice, distinctly heard by the whole assemblage, made the following proclamation:

"Be it known to all present, that his Most Serene Highness the Prince of Wales, in exercise of the

power granted to him by our sovereign lord and master the king, has been graciously pleased to confer a full and free pardon upon the person known as *El Cortejo*, now before you."

Here the officer was interrupted by an irrepressible outburst of acclamations, and shouts resounded of "Dios guarde al Rey! Viva el nobil Principe de Galles. Viva! viva!"

Placing his hand upon his breast, and with a look expressive of the deepest gratitude, El Cortejo bowed towards the royal gallery, inclining himself twice to the saddle-bow.

While this took place, the torero, whom Graham had recognised, entered the arena, and stationed himself near El Cortejo, but his presence was almost unnoticed, until attention was called to him by the officer, who, as soon as silence was restored, thus proceeded:

"His Most Serene Highness the Prince has also been graciously pleased to pardon Don Gonzalez

de Montalban, lately known as Lieutenant Roque, and who is now before you."

Hereupon the torero, whom we must henceforth recognise as Don Gonzalez, stepped forward, and bowed twice profoundly to the royal gallery, in token of his gratitude.

A hundred voices then cried out, "Who is El Cortejo?"

"Ay, who is he?" added a hundred others.

"Be silent, and you shall learn," said the corregidor, in a voice that dominated all the others, and called immediate attention to the speaker. "Don Flores de Cuenca," he continued, addressing El Cortejo, "be pleased to come forward."

Thus enjoined, El Cortejo placed his hat on his head, to intimate that he was a grandee, and pushed his steed towards him.

"Don Flores," pursued the corregidor, "a full pardon having been accorded you by his Highness the Prince of Wales, his majesty, out of his in-

finite goodness and leniency, and in consideration of your youth and of extenuating circumstances that have been represented to him, is willing to forget your offences and delinquencies, and in the hope and belief of your amendment, he restores to you your title of Conde de Valverde, together with your forfeited estates. Here is the warrant," he added, delivering to him the paper signed by the king.

"I humbly thank his majesty and the prince," replied Valverde, in tones of deep emotion. "My future career shall prove me not unworthy of their goodness. If I live, I will redeem the errors of my youth."

An immense shout showed the sympathy of the spectators.

"Accept my congratulations, count," said Buckingham, offering him his hand, which the other gratefully took; "when we first met, I had no suspicion of your real rank."

"There I had the advantage of your grace,"

replied Valverde, "for I ascertained your rank and that of the illustrious personage with you. I owe my restoration to you. Had it not been for the opportunity you have afforded me of appearing before his majesty and the prince, I should not have received a pardon, or regained my title and estates. Be assured of my eternal gratitude."

"You give me more thanks than are my due, marquis," said Buckingham. "You are more indebted to the Conde de Gondomar than to me. He acquainted the prince and myself with your real history, and it was from what he said of you that I determined to give you a chance of retrieving your tarnished character."

"You will have no cause to regret what you have done, my lord duke," said Valverde. "From this moment I am an altered man."

"You shall not want an opportunity of distinction, since you seek it, count," said Olivarez.

"That is all I desire," cried Valverde. "If

your excellency will send me and Don Gonzales de Montalban to Mexico, we will not return till we have won renown."

"You shall have your wish," replied Olivarez. "You shall start to-morrow."

As Valverde bowed his thanks the trumpets sounded, and the party rode out of the arena.

With the strange occurrence just narrated, which excited the assemblage in an extraordinary manner, all interest in the bull-fight seemed to cease, and it would have been well if the spectacle could then have terminated, for only a languid interest was felt in what followed. There were more courses, but they only seemed like a repetition of those that had preceded them, and there was no achievement in any degree comparable to that of the Marquis de Valverde.

The fête was terminated by a grand procession of all the combatants, who marched round the arena, and saluted the royal gallery as they passed

before it. Graham was much applauded, but the loudest and longest cheers were given to the Conde de Valverde, who was adjudged the hero of the day.

End of the Fourth Book.

BOOK V.

EL BUEN RETIRO.

I.

HOW THE NUNCIO STROVE TO CONVERT CHARLES.

NEARLY six months had elapsed since the arrival of Charles and Buckingham in Madrid, and not only was the object of the expedition unattained, but the prince and his favourite were less hopeful of its accomplishment than they had been at first. The prince's ardour had not been cooled by the delay, but he continued as passionately attached to the Infanta as ever. Neither had anything occurred to make him doubt the sincerity of the king's intentions towards him. Philip, as we

have already stated, had conceived a real regard for his expected brother-in-law, and was quite as anxious for the completion of the match as Charles himself; but Olivarez was determined it never should take place unless Charles became a proselyte. And he did not despair of such a result, though Charles, when closely pressed, always avoided coming to a decision.

At last, the Papal Nuncio undertook to bring the prince to reason. He sought an interview with Charles, and told him he came to express the lively satisfaction felt by the Pope at the disposition evinced by his highness to enter into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church.

"I am enjoined to read this letter to you, prince," he added, producing a despatch. "It is written by his Holiness, with his own hand. 'We have commanded,' he says, 'to make continually most humble prayers to the Father of Light, that he would be pleased to put the Prince of Wales,

as a fair flower of Christendom, and the only hope of Great Britain, in possession of that most noble heritage, which his ancestors have purchased for him, to defend the authority of the Sovereign High Priest, and to fight against the monsters of Heresy.' In these prayers," pursued the Nuncio, "I most devoutly join, and I earnestly exhort your highness, as well for your temporal prosperity as for your spiritual weal, to conform to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff. If your highness will solemnly promise to renounce your errors and embrace the Roman Catholic faith, and will also engage to use your utmost endeavours to bring over the court and kingdom of England to that persuasion, as the representative of his Holiness, I am able to inform you that the dispensation to the match shall no longer be withheld, the hand of the Infanta and her immense dowry shall be ensured to you, and the support of Spain, under any difficulties that may arise, shall be guaranteed. In

making this offer, I speak not only for the Sovereign Pontiff, whose envoy and representative I am, but for his most Catholic Majesty Philip IV. It is now for your highness to decide. Prudence and policy alike dictate the course you ought to take. You love the Infanta Maria, who is a princess in all respects worthy of you. But there can be no real union where the creeds of husband and wife are opposed. Misery and aversion must spring from such a match. What must the Infanta's feelings be if she were wedded to one whom she believes doomed to perdition? I pray your highness to reflect upon this point. The more dearly she loves you—and she *does* love you dearly, I know—the deeper would be her solicitude."

"I have thought of this," observed Charles, gravely, "and I am aware that the consideration has been impressed upon the Infanta by Padre Ambrosio, but I conclude that this obstacle would be removed by the dispensation."

"The dispensation would only apply to the Infanta, and would have no efficacy in regard to your highness," replied the Nuncio. "To say that your union could possibly be happy if you continue in heresy, would be to deceive you. Better abandon the match altogether than persist in it, if you persist in error. Such is my opinion—such is the opinion of his Holiness."

"But his Holiness has not refused the dispensation," remarked Charles.

"True; but he cannot overcome his reluctance to grant it," said the Nuncio, "and the cause of his hesitation must be evident. He has the welfare of his religion at heart. He desires to regard your highness as a friend, but at present he can only look upon you as an enemy. You have it in your power, by a word, to change his sentiments—to obtain all you seek—and secure felicity here and hereafter."

"Even if I were disposed to accede to the pro-

position, I could not do so without consulting the king my father," replied Charles.

"The king your father is blinded by heresy, and cannot see the truth," said the Nuncio. "It is not needful to consult him. His Holiness will be a father to you—the best of fathers, because he will preserve your soul. Oh! my son," he added, rising, and speaking with almost apostolical fervour, "hesitate not to throw yourself into our arms! We will receive you as the prodigal was received by his father. We will evoke Heaven's blessings upon you—blessings that will be denied if you continue in heresy and sin. We will make ready the bride—who, otherwise, will never be yours—and prepare the marriage feast. We will establish you firmly in your kingdom, and protect you against all enemies. Be ours, and all is won!"

"I must have further time for reflection," said Charles.

"Hesitation at such a moment is worse than weakness, it is sinful," rejoined the Nuncio. "Be not swayed by the advice of evil counsellors. Listen to those who have your real welfare at heart, and who are clothed with wisdom and authority. As Heaven's vicegerent, whom I represent, I promise you happiness, the bride you have chosen, and a kingdom here and hereafter. Can you hesitate?"

"I must—I must," said Charles.

"Let me implore you not to reject my offer, my dear son," said the Nuncio. "Let me go forth and say to the king, who loves you as a brother, that it is done—that your conversion is completed—and I shall fill his heart with gladness. Let me tell the Infanta that every obstacle to her union with you is removed, and all her anxiety will disappear. Let me inform his Holiness that his lost son has returned, and there will be jubilation at Rome. Let me announce to this faithful people

that their hopes have been crowned with success, and songs of rejoicing will be heard throughout the land. Shall I go forth and do this?"

"No," replied Charles. "I am not prepared to change my faith."

"Have my arguments failed to convince your highness?" demanded the Nuncio, with a look of disappointment.

"I acknowledge the force of all you have said," rejoined Charles. "But I cannot now decide."

"Do not let the propitious moment pass, or it may never return," said the Nuncio, somewhat sternly. "Your heart is now softened, but it may become callous. You now see clearly, but your sight may be darkened. You have an evil counsellor, prince, who thwarts your good intentions. His pride and presumption are adverse to your best interests. Shake off his pernicious influence. He is utterly unworthy of the favour you bestow upon him. I know that the Duke of Buckingham is

violently opposed to your meditated faith—but set him at nought, and, if need be, dismiss him."

Just as the words were uttered the door opened, and Buckingham stood before them.

"Methought I heard my name pronounced," he said, bowing in a supercilious manner to the Nuncio, who coldly returned his salutation.

"You were not deceived, my lord duke," rejoined the Nuncio. "Your name was upon my lips at the moment, and I hope you heard what I said of you."

"So you have not numbered me among the Pope's adherents, I shall be perfectly content," retorted Buckingham.

"His Holiness would rather have you as an enemy than an ally, for you injure every cause you desire to serve," rejoined the Nuncio, sternly. "I have warned his highness the prince against your baneful counsels, and I repeat the warning in your presence. I have urged him to dismiss you——"

"You have dared to do this?" cried Buckingham, transported with sudden fury.

"I have dared to do it, my lord," rejoined the Nuncio, in a taunting tone, calculated to exasperate Buckingham still further, "and I will add, that no step that could be taken by his highness would be more gratifying to the king and his court."

"You presume too much on your sacred office!" exclaimed Buckingham, whose rage had become uncontrollable.

"Calm yourself, my lord," interposed Charles.

"Nay, let him go on," said the Nuncio. "I am glad he should display himself in his true colours. If the duke will venture to comport himself thus towards me, the representative of the Sovereign Pontiff, what treatment could the Infanta expect from him! I have warned your highness, it will be my duty also to warn his majesty against the danger which his sister will incur."

"You fear me, and seek to get rid of me,

cried Buckingham, "but you will fail in your design."

"No, my lord, it is the prince who fears you, not I," rejoined the Nuncio, with calm sternness; "but I trust he will shake off the yoke to which he has too long submitted."

With an obeisance to Charles, but without noticing Buckingham, he then quitted the cabinet.

"What have you done?" cried Charles, as soon as the Nuncio was gone. "You have destroyed all my plans by your intemperate conduct."

"Better it should be thus!—better the match should be broken off—than your highness should be subjugated by this Papal envoy. We have been scandalously treated. Let us depart at once."

"You may go, Steenie, since you are bent upon leaving, but I shall stay," said Charles.

"What! remain without me!" cried Buckingham, in amazement.

"Most certainly," rejoined Charles, seating him-

self quietly. "I have no intention whatever of going without the Infanta. I love her, and mean to make her mine, whatever time or trouble it may cost to accomplish my purpose."

"Well, since your highness is resolved to stay, I must needs stay too," rejoined Buckingham.

"But if you *do* stay, you must be upon your good behaviour, Steenie," said Charles. "You have contrived to offend all the court, and now you have made an enemy of the Nuncio."

"The king your father will approve of what I have done," said Buckingham.

"Not when he hears my version of the story, and learns my design, which you have all but defeated," said the prince. "Unless you will promise to put due constraint upon yourself, I must order your departure."

"Order my departure!" exclaimed Buckingham, in extremity of surprise. "By Heaven! I begin to believe that these wily priests have produced some effect upon you."

"They have taught me dissimulation, which it seems impossible that you can practise, Steenie."

"No, thank Heaven! I cannot," cried Buckingham. "I must speak out."

"Therefore you are better away," said Charles; "and I advise you to make preparations for immediate departure."

"Nothing will give me more satisfaction, provided your highness will accompany me."

"I remain," said Charles, firmly.

"Then so do I," cried Buckingham.

At this moment an usher announced the Earl of Bristol and the Conde de Gondomar.

Buckingham cordially saluted the Spanish minister, but scarcely deigned to notice Bristol.

"I am sent by his majesty," said Gondomar, bowing profoundly to Charles, "to entreat your highness's attendance at a meeting of the state council to-morrow."

"And mine also, I presume, count?" remarked Buckingham.

Gondomar was evidently embarrassed by the question, and hesitated to reply.

"What am I to understand by your silence, count?" demanded Buckingham.

"Simply that you are not invited," remarked Bristol.

"Ha! then the meeting can be of no importance," cried Buckingham.

"The Conde de Gondomar will tell your grace differently," rejoined Bristol.

"You will judge of its importance when I state that certain articles proposed to be added to the marriage-treaty will be discussed," said Gondomar.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Buckingham. "Are you invited, my lord?" he added, turning sharply to Bristol.

"I am invited," replied the other. "And so is Sir Walter Aston."

"Then either I shall be present at the conference, or the prince will not attend it," said Buckingham.

"What has happened, count?" said Charles to Gondomar.

"Speak out, count," said Buckingham, seeing that Gondomar hesitated. "Fear not to offend me."

"To be plain, then, your grace has incurred the king's displeasure," returned Gondomar. "Some words that have passed between you and the Nuncio have been repeated to his majesty, and have excited his anger."

"I am sorry for it," said Charles, with a look of annoyance. "But I have but one course to take. A slight to the Duke of Buckingham is a slight to me. I cannot attend the meeting without his grace."

"I will convey your highness's answer to his majesty," said Gondomar.

"Beseech your highness to consider well before you take this step," said Bristol. "It will lead to unpleasant consequences."

"It can only lead to a postponement of the

meeting," said Buckingham. "Deliver the message, count."

"No," rejoined Gondomar, after a moment's reflection. "I will rather take upon myself the responsibility of inviting your grace. Come with the prince to the meeting. If you will adopt a conciliatory tone, all may be arranged."

"You hear, Steenie," said Charles; "it is on this understanding that I agree to take you."

Shortly afterwards Gondomar and Bristol departed, leaving Charles and his favourite alone together.

II.

IN WHAT WAY BUCKINGHAM WAS HUMILIATED BY OLIVAREZ.

NEXT day, at the hour appointed, Charles, attended by Buckingham and the two ambassadors, repaired to the council-chamber.

Philip had not yet arrived, but the members of the council—all nobles of the highest rank—with the Conde de Olivarez, had assembled. With the exception of the Conde de Gondomar, they all manifested great surprise on seeing Buckingham enter with the prince, and the Conde-Duque re-

ceived him with constrained courtesy. Buckingham, however, did not manifest the slightest embarrassment at the reception accorded him, but comported himself with his customary arrogance.

Ere many minutes the king made his appearance, and after saluting Charles with his wonted cordiality, turned to Buckingham, whose obeisance he had not deigned to notice, and said, coldly:

"I did not expect to find your grace here."

"My presence appeared indispensable, sire," rejoined Buckingham, "as I understood that certain new articles connected with the marriage-treaty were to be discussed."

"I could not have attended without the duke, sire," said Charles.

"I should have thought your highness might have fully confided in the wisdom and experience of the Earl of Bristol," said Philip, scarcely able to conceal his displeasure. "Since the Duke of Buckingham has taken part in these consultations,

frequent disputes and interruptions have occurred, which I hoped might be avoided on the present occasion."

"Sire," said Buckingham, "I trust I shall not offend your majesty if I say that I have a right to be present at these councils."

"Ha! since your grace takes that tone," said Philip, sharply, "I must inquire by what title you claim to be admitted to the meetings?"

"I claim it, sire, as the guardian and adviser of his highness the Prince of Wales," replied Buckingham, proudly, "who has been entrusted to me by his royal father. I claim it also as first minister of the English cabinet, without whose full approval this marriage-treaty cannot be concluded. And let me state at once, in order to save time and prevent disputes, which I dislike as much as your majesty, that I object to add any new articles to the treaty, and, on the prince's part, decline to discuss them. The treaty must be taken as it

stands. If additions are constantly to be made to it, it can never be completed."

"Hold, my lord duke! you proceed too fast," interposed Olivarez. "We cannot submit to dictation, especially from one who has no right to a seat in our councils. Had the Earl of Bristol objected to these articles, we should have listened to him with respect, but you have no title whatever to a hearing. If you have a commission from his Majesty King James, produce it. If you have credentials from the English council, lay them before us. But if you have neither commission nor credentials, be silent."

"Why was not this demand made before, my lord?" said Buckingham. "I have attended many councils without exception being taken to my presence."

"Consideration for his highness the prince has induced us thus far to tolerate your interference, my lord duke," rejoined Olivarez; "but our pa-

tience is now exhausted. In the Earl of Bristol and Sir Walter Aston his highness has able and judicious counsellors, in whom he may confide. He can dispense with your grace."

"Then my place is no longer here," said Buckingham, making a movement to depart, and glancing at the prince as if he expected him to withdraw likewise.

But Charles took no notice of the signal.

"A moment, my lord duke," said Philip, in a tone that recalled the haughty favourite to his senses, and made him sensible of his indiscretion; "a word, before you quit our presence—never to re-enter it. Your appearance at our councils has been irregular and unwarranted, and we have brooked language from you to which we are wholly unaccustomed, but we have borne it out of love to the prince. Now, mark well what I say. You yourself are the main hindrance to the fulfilment of the proposed alliance between the In-

fanta and the Prince of Wales. Even if every other obstacle were removed, and all we could desire agreed to, the position you occupy in regard to his highness would present an insurmountable difficulty."

"How so, sire?" demanded Buckingham.

"Your influence over the prince would be prejudicial to my sister," replied Philip. "I cannot expose her to the risk."

"We entirely approve of your majesty's determination," said the whole of the council, with the exception of Gondomar.

"Sire," exclaimed Buckingham, "I know not why your majesty has conceived this ill opinion of me, nor can I do more than conjecture who has poisoned your mind, but this I know, that the Infanta—should the prince be fortunate enough to obtain her hand—will not have a servant more faithful and devoted than myself. Thus much I dare avouch, and I will maintain it with my life,

that not one of your grandees — not even the Conde-Duque — could serve her more faithfully than I would. The prince, who knows my sentiments, will confirm what I say. In retiring from your councils, in which, it appears, I have improperly intruded, I must entreat your majesty's forgiveness, and the forgiveness of these noble lords, for any hasty expressions I have used. I should indeed regret it, if I could be supposed wanting in due respect to your majesty, or in consideration to them."

"Sire," said Charles, rising, and speaking with great dignity, "it would be grievous at this juncture, when there is every prospect of the negotiation being speedily concluded, that an interruption should occur. I am certain that his grace of Buckingham, as indeed he has assured your majesty, is sensible that he has been far too hasty, and that he will not so offend again, if he be permitted to occupy a place in the councils.

As to the apprehension which your majesty has expressed in regard to the Infanta, I can without hesitation declare it to be groundless. The Duke of Buckingham would be utterly unworthy of the favour he enjoys from the king my father—he would be utterly unworthy of my favour, if he could be other than a devoted servant of the Infanta. Unhappily, in arranging this treaty, religious questions have been chiefly discussed, and these discussions have not always been conducted, on the duke's part, with befitting temper, but I trust all difficulties may now be reconciled, so that no further disputes can arise. We will make every concession possible, and your majesty will not ask more than we can fairly yield."

"I trust we may come to an entire agreement, prince," said the king, with a certain significance. "The Duke of Buckingham must now be convinced that the violent opposition he has hitherto offered is injudicious and injurious; and in the

persuasion that he will henceforward adopt a different course, we will overlook what has passed, and waive the objections that have been raised to his remaining in the council."

At this intimation of his majesty's pleasure, the whole of the council arose and bowed in assent. Buckingham threw himself on his knee before the king, and while kissing the hand graciously extended to him, protested unalterable devotion to his majesty and the Infanta.

As he arose and took the seat he had heretofore occupied at the council-table, and which was on the right of Charles, Olivarez observed, in a low tone to the king, "Your majesty has gained your point. He will no longer oppose the prince's conversion."

"I think not," replied Philip, in the same tone.

If they could have seen into Buckingham's heart, they would have thought otherwise. At

that very moment he was meditating revenge for the humiliation he had undergone.

"I will break in pieces the fabric I have put together with so much trouble," he mentally ejaculated. "The match shall never take place."

III.

AN EVIL OMEN.

WELL knowing that any attempt to induce the prince suddenly to break off the match would be vain, Buckingham carefully concealed his design, and feigned to be as well disposed towards the alliance as ever.

If Charles's mind had been at ease, and if he had been allowed a certain intercourse with the Infanta, his prolonged stay at Madrid would have been delightful to him. But the uncertainty in which he was kept, the dissimulation he was compelled to

practise, and the arts that were used to ensnare him, interfered with his enjoyment. The grand festivities which had celebrated his arrival had long since ceased, but everything that regal hospitality could devise was done to render his residence at the palace agreeable.

One circumstance, trifling enough in itself, confirmed him in his opinion, that whatever difficulties he might encounter, he should eventually succeed in the object of his expedition.

It may be remembered, that on the morning after his arrival a snow-white dove alighted at the window of his chamber in the House of Seven Chimneys. Singular to relate, when he took up his abode at the royal palace, the dove followed him thither, constantly appearing each morning at the same hour, and if the window was open, as was generally the case, it entered the room and flew towards the prince's couch. So fond did he become of his little visitor, that if it had failed to

appear he would have been miserable. The dove fed out of his hand, and allowed him to caress it.

Charles could not fail to mention the circumstance to the Infanta, who was greatly interested by the relation, and expressed a desire to see the dove, whereupon Charles caused the bird to be conveyed to her.

Next morning the dove appeared as usual, and flying towards the prince's couch, evidently sought to attract his attention. Charles then remarked that a blue silken thread was tied round its neck, and on further investigation discovered that a tress of light golden hair was hidden beneath the bird's wing. He could not doubt to whom he owed the gift, and pressed it rapturously to his lips. Satisfied that he had now found a means of secret correspondence with his mistress, and determined to make trial of the dove's fidelity, he sought for a little diamond anchor which he had designed to present to the Infanta, and securing it in the same

manner as the tress, carried the dove to the window, and cast it forth.

Charles watched the bird in its flight, and saw that it entered a window in the palace which he knew opened upon the Infanta's apartments.

In less than half an hour the little messenger returned, having accomplished its mission, and seemingly proud of the feat. The diamond anchor was gone, but in its place was the fragment of a kerchief, evidently just torn off, and embroidered with the letter "M," proving from whom it came.

Many a brief but tender missive was subsequently despatched by Charles to his mistress, but though the dove failed not to convey them, the prince received none in reply. Sometimes the Infanta would send her lover a flower, or other little token, but she only wrote once.

Only once! And it shall now be told how that note reached Charles.

He had been more than six months at the palace,

and during the whole of that time the dove had never failed to greet him as he rose. One morning he missed his little visitant, and the circumstance filled him with sad forebodings, for it occurred at a period when fresh obstacles had arisen to the match. For the last few days he had not seen the Infanta, who was staying at the time at the summer palace of El Buen Retiro.

When Charles awoke on the following morning, he glanced anxiously towards the open casement in the hope of beholding the dove, but it was not to be seen in the spot where it had been accustomed to alight. The same forebodings of ill which he had experienced on the previous day, assailed the prince, but with greater force. He sought to banish them by slumber, but he could not sleep, and as he raised himself in his couch, he perceived a white object lying on the floor near the window.

Springing from his couch, he flew to the spot,

and then saw what had happened. The dove had been struck by a hawk, but, though mortally hurt, had escaped its pursuer, who had not dared to follow it into the room. It had fallen, as we have said, just within the casement, and was still beating the floor feebly with outspread wings. Its snowy plumage was dabbled with blood.

The wounded bird fluttered slightly in the prince's grasp as he took it gently up. But with that faint struggle all was over. The little heart had ceased to beat—the faithful messenger could serve him no more. A sharp pang shot through the prince's heart as he gazed at the dead bird, and he now more than ever regarded the event as an evil omen.

"So, thou art gone, poor bird!" he ejaculated —"thou, who wert first to welcome me to this city, and hast ever since been my daily solace. In thought I have ever connected thee with her I love, and with my hopes of winning her, and

now thou art stricken down. Poor bird, I shall miss thee sorely!"

In the pain which he felt at this catastrophe, Charles had not remarked that beneath the left wing of the dove there was a letter, secured by a silken thread.

The blood-stained condition of the letter sadly diminished the delight with which Charles welcomed it, and it was almost with a shudder that he opened it, and read as follows:

"A masked fête will be given to-morrow night at the Buen Retiro, to which you are bidden. If you desire to exchange a few words in private with one who loves you, and must ever love you, though you seem not to value her love, you will find her beside the lake, near the foot of the avenue of lindens, at midnight.

"Unless you can prove your love sincere, the meeting will be our last.

"This letter will be conveyed to you by your little messenger, who has been kept a prisoner for a day for the purpose. Do not send an answer, as there would be great risk of discovery."

"I could not send an answer if I would," exclaimed Charles, mournfully, "for my trusty little messenger is dead. Alas! the sky, which looked so bright a short time ago, is now overcast. Why should she doubt my love? Why should she say that the meeting may be our last? But I must shake off these misgivings, which owe their origin to this sad accident. Let me look forward to a blissful interview to-morrow night. Will it be blissful?" he added, with an involuntary shudder "Poor bird! I would thou hadst escaped!"

IV.

SHOWING THAT THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH.

CHARLES had just completed his toilette, which, contrary to royal usage, he performed without assistance, when Graham entered the chamber.

"What do I see?" cried the young man, aghast at the sight of the dove. "Your highness's favourite dove killed. I am right sorry for it."

"Think you the accident portends misfortune, Dick?" said Charles.

"It may signify a cross in love, especially if the poor bird brought a letter," replied Graham.

"The bird *did* bring a letter—the first I have received from the Infanta, and it may be the last I shall ever receive from her."

"Your highness attaches far too much importance to the accident," said Graham. "It is not strange that the poor dove should be killed, but it is marvellous that it should have escaped so long. Lovers, as I know from experience, are full of idle apprehensions."

"How does your own love-affair progress, Dick?"

"But indifferently," replied Graham. "The lady returns my passion, but her father has promised her to another, and, like a proud Castilian as he is, will not break his word, in spite of his daughter's tears and entreaties."

"A promise once made is sacred," remarked Charles. "In that respect, I myself am a Castilian."

"Your highness would think differently if you

were circumstanced as I am," said Graham. "You would regard this rigorous adherence to a promise, which, I venture to say, ought never to have been made, as abominable obstinacy and cruelty. Doña Casilda also regards it in that light. We are both of us well-nigh distracted."

"I am sorry for you, Dick," said the prince. "You are in a sad case. But you have only to thank yourself for the trouble into which you have got. You ought not to have fallen in love with Doña Casilda, if you knew she was engaged to another."

"But the mischief was done before I was aware of the engagement," replied Graham. "From the very moment when I first beheld Doña Casilda in the gorge of Pancorbo — your highness will remember the occasion—I fell desperately in love with her."

"That I can understand, but you ought to have conquered the passion."

"Impossible, your highness!—impossible!"

"At all events, you ought not to put yourself in the way of danger. You have been a daily visitant, as I understand, at the casa of the Conde de Saldana, and I myself have frequently seen you walking with Doña Casilda and Doña Flor in the Prado. At the great bull-fight, it was said that you appeared as a picador merely to distinguish yourself before Doña Casilda, and sent her a trophy taken from the bull you had killed."

"All this is perfectly true, your highness," replied Graham. "But the Conde de Saldana desired me to make his house my home, and I took him at his word. My chivalrous feelings prompted me to pay attention to Doña Casilda."

"It is strange that the conde should permit the continuance of your visits, now that he has found out that you are enamoured of his daughter," observed Charles. "He is much to blame."

"If your highness pleases, I will tell you precisely what has occurred," said Graham.

"I shall be glad to hear it," replied Charles, seating himself, and assuming an attitude of attention. "I have often intended to question you on the subject."

"I shall use no disguise," said Graham; "but, to make myself quite understood, I must go back to the commencement of the affair. Your highness is aware that I was very warmly received by the Conde de Saldana, who in Castilian fashion placed his house and all in it at my disposal, and I became his daily guest. But if my visits were agreeable to the conde and his daughter, they were by no means so to Don Christobal de Gavina, to whom Doña Casilda has the misfortune to be engaged, and that personage manifested his dislike to me in many ways, but at Casilda's request I avoided an open quarrel with him. On the other hand, the old conde's regard for me increased, and I became convinced that if he had not promised his daughter to Don Christobal, he would have preferred me as a

son-in-law. Casilda thought so too. She began to find it difficult to maintain a semblance of love for Don Christobal, and this increased his hatred of me, to whom he justly attributed the change in her feelings. It being impossible that things could go on much longer in this way without a rupture, I came to the resolution, a few days ago, of unbosoming myself to the conde."

"I am glad to hear it," remarked Charles. "But you should have done so earlier."

"I sought an interview with him," said Graham, "and then told him that I had conceived the strongest passion for his daughter, who returned it with equal ardour, and that as neither of us could be happy apart from the other, I besought him to give me her hand. He listened to me with kindness, his countenance expressing much concern, and when I had done, he said, 'I ought to have foreseen this. I was to blame in allowing you to be so much together. I am very sorry for you both. I have a great regard for

you, Don Ricardo. I love you as a son; and if I had another daughter I would give her to you. But I cannot give you Casilda.' 'Wherefore not?' I entreated. 'Because, as you know, I have promised her to Don Christobal, and my promise must be kept.' 'But you will not force her inclinations, señor conde?' I ventured to say. 'When the engagement took place, Casilda's heart was disengaged, and she readily entered into it,' he replied. 'It cannot be broken off without the consent of Don Christobal.' 'But if you sacrifice your daughter to a man she cannot love, you will condemn her to a life of wretchedness,' I said. 'I will speak to Don Christobal, and will represent the matter to him in this light,' he said; 'and I trust I may prevail, but I own I have not much hope, for he is passionately attached to Casilda.' I thanked him warmly for his kindness, and he again promised that no efforts should be wanting on his part to accomplish the object.

"As chance would have it, Don Christobal did

not make his appearance that day. So Casilda and I were kept in suspense. Next day, when I presented myself, as usual, I did not see the mistress of my heart, who was generally the first to greet me, and this circumstance filled me with sad forebodings, which were speedily verified. The conde sent for me to his library, and when I entered it, I found him alone. He looked grave and sad, and motioned me to take a chair. Without any preliminary observation, he said, 'I have seen Don Christobal, and have disguised nothing from him, but have told him exactly how matters stand —that Casilda has ceased to entertain any affection for him, and has given her heart to you. I therefore advised him to think of her no more, but to seek another bride, who would be more sensible of his merits. He was deaf to all my arguments, and peremptorily refused to liberate me from my promise.' 'But you do not intend to give Casilda to him, señor conde?' I cried, in despair. 'You

will kill us both.' 'I cannot help it,' he replied, sadly. 'Since Don Christobal claims fulfilment of my promise, I must obey. You must see Casilda no more; and, painful as it is to me to do so, I must henceforward exclude you from my house.'

"All this was said with such kindness as in some degree to mitigate the severity of his words, and I could not doubt that he himself suffered much. 'You pass a sentence worse than death upon me, señor conde,' I said; 'but before it is carried into execution, I beseech you to grant me a last interview with Casilda.' 'It will do no good,' he rejoined, 'and will only pain you both.' But I refused to leave the house till he complied, and at last, fearing from my excited state that I might do some violence, he yielded—making it, however, an express condition that our parting should be brief.

"I found Casilda dissolved in tears. She flung her arms round me, and declared she would not be

separated from me. Between love and anxiety I was almost distracted, and scarce knew what to do. She declared she never would wed Don Christobal, and proposed immediate flight; but I represented to her that such a step was utterly impracticable. It was then arranged that she should elope as soon as preparations could be made—that a priest should be found to unite us—and that we should then hurry off to Santander, and embark for England."

"What! carry her off to England!" exclaimed Charles. "You must be crazed by passion to think of such a wild scheme. But I forbid it—peremptorily forbid it—on pain of my displeasure."

"Be pleased then to tell me what I am to do," rejoined Graham. "Casilda is determined to throw herself into my arms. Does your highness advise me to wed her, and take the chance of a reconciliation with her father afterwards? That, perhaps, would be the simplest plan, and

the safest. A priest can always be found to perform the marriage ceremony."

"I advise no such course; and, in fact, I disapprove of the proceeding altogether," said Charles. "I recommend you to abandon the affair."

"What! give up Casilda!" exclaimed Graham. "I would sooner put on King Philip's livery and turn Romanist than do so. I begin to think your highness cannot really love the Infanta, or you would not recommend such a course to me."

"Well, then, do what you will, since counsel is thrown away," said Charles. "But answer me one question—and answer it truly. Since the conde's house is closed to you, and Doña Casilda, no doubt, is carefully watched, what means have you of communicating with her?"

"Your highness may remember the fair damsel who was instrumental in delivering us from the brigands in the Forest of Orléans. It would be too long to tell you how Rose des Bois came to

Madrid, and may suffice to state that she is now Doña Casilda's camerera, and aids me to communicate with the lady."

"I fear you are in bad hands," remarked Charles. "Rose may betray you."

"Your highness does her an injustice. Rose is a most faithful and devoted creature. I had some suspicions of her once myself, but they have wholly disappeared. She brings me a little billet-doux daily from her mistress, and takes back one in return. The last piece of intelligence I have received is, that Doña Casilda will be at the masked fête at the Buen Retiro to-morrow night. "She has agreed to meet me at midnight, near the lake, at the end of the linden avenue."

"That must not be!" exclaimed Charles. "I am to meet the Infanta at the same hour and at the same place."

"That is awkward indeed," said Graham. "And by a strange chance, Doña Flor has

made a similar appointment with the Duke de Cea. But of course we must give way to your highness."

"Nay, it matters not," observed Charles. "You can withdraw when you see the Infanta appear, and bid De Cea do so likewise."

"I will not fail," replied Graham.

At this moment the door opened, and the Earl of Bristol entered the chamber.

"Good morrow, my lord," said Charles. "I am glad to see you."

"I have come thus early, because I have something to say to your highness in private," rejoined Bristol.

On hearing this, Graham bowed to the prince, and retired.

V.

HOW THE EARL OF BRISTOL REMONSTRATED WITH THE PRINCE.

"Now, my lord," said Charles, "we are alone, and not likely to be interrupted, even by the Duke of Buckingham."

"It was specially to avoid his grace that I came thus early," returned the earl. "I will not preface what I am about to say by any observations, but come at once to the point. I hear it on all hands—from the chief nobles of the court—from the Conde-Duque—from the king himself—that your high-

ness is about to make a public recantation and embrace the Roman Catholic faith. Now, though I have heard this statement made by those I have mentioned, I will not believe it unless it be confirmed from your own lips."

"Suppose the statement true," said Charles.

"But it *cannot* be true," cried Bristol. "I have denied it to all—and I will continue to deny it. I will not believe that your highness can have been persuaded to take a step so calamitous to yourself and to England—a step that will deeply afflict all your followers—and that will assuredly abridge your royal father's days, if it does not kill him outright. If, unhappily, you have yielded to the arguments of your enemies—for such they are—if you have formed any such fatal resolution—I beseech you to abandon it while there is yet time. Olivarez and the Papal Nuncio may have held out inducements to you to change your faith. But they have deluded you by false representations.

Hear the truth from me. The Roman Catholic party has no power in England, and will never regain its power. What think you would be the effect in England if the news were brought that you—the heir to the throne—had become a convert to Rome? Think you the step would be approved? Think you it would be tolerated? Think you the Infanta would be welcomed as an English princess? Prince, there would be a rebellion."

"If there should be, Olivarez has said that Spain will help me to crush it," remarked Charles.

"Not all the navies and armies of Spain could crush it," rejoined Bristol. "You will forfeit your throne if you take that step. But again I say, that I cannot—I will not believe it. Oh! give me the assurance that you will abandon this fatal resolution," he added, throwing himself at the prince's feet.

"Rise, my lord," said Charles. "I will not

keep you a moment longer in suspense. I ought not to have trifled with your feelings, but I desired fully to test your zeal in behalf of the Protestant faith, and I rejoice to find it so earnest. Rest certain that my principles are unshaken, and that no consideration should induce me to embrace the religion of Rome."

"Your highness's words have taken a heavy load from my breast," said Bristol. "Have I your authority to contradict the rumour?"

"Not yet," replied Charles. "I would have Olivarez and the Nuncio still entertain the belief that they can gain me over."

"To what end?" asked Bristol, uneasily.

"Be content, my lord," rejoined Charles. "I can satisfy you no further now. If I play the hypocrite it is my own affair."

"I hope your highness may not play the part too long," said Bristol. "You may be caught in a snare, if you do not take heed. You are en-

gaged with crafty and unscrupulous antagonists, who may prove too much for you. Empower me, I pray you, to contradict their assertions."

"I have said that it cannot be at present, my lord," rejoined Charles.

And seeing that the prince was immovable, Bristol bowed and retired.

VI.

BUCKINGHAM'S PLAN OF VENGEANCE.

LATER on in the same day Charles was alone in his cabinet, when Buckingham entered, and threw himself, as was his wont, carelessly into a chair.

"I am heartily sick of Madrid!" he exclaimed, "and long to get back to England. I should think your highness must be equally weary of this dull and monotonous court life."

"I do not find the court life either dull or monotonous," replied Charles. "There is plenty

of amusement, and of every variety. The fêtes are endless."

"True, but I am tired of them," rejoined Buckingham. "Our dear dad and gossip is most anxious for our return. I begin to think we have stayed away too long from him."

"I think so too, Steenie," replied Charles. "But I do not intend to return till I can take my bride with me."

"Then you will stay till this time next year," said Buckingham, "for the marriage is no nearer completion than it was when we first arrived. Your highness has been shamefully trifled with, and you owe it to your own dignity to resent the treatment you have experienced."

"You are still smarting under the reprimand you received from the king, Steenie," said Charles.

"It is not likely that I should either forget it or forgive it," rejoined Buckingham. "But the insult to me was a far greater insult to your high-

ness, and ought to have been resented. Since, however, you are not disposed to take offence, neither can I. But for your own sake, this negotiation must be brought to an end. If Philip continues to make further excuses for delay, say that the king your father has recalled you, and produce the letter we have just received from his majesty. There is no other way to bring the matter to an issue."

"I shall have an interview with the Infanta to-morrow night at the masked fête at the Buen Retiro," said Charles. "After that I will decide."

"Nothing will come of the interview but disappointment," said Buckingham. "For my own part, I regard the affair as completely at an end. I have long felt that the marriage is impracticable, except upon terms which it is impossible to accept. The sooner, therefore, it is broken off the better. I will get you another bride. The Princess Hen-

riette Marie of France will suit you better than the Infanta Maria."

"But my heart is given to Maria!" exclaimed Charles, with anguish.

"She is not worthy of you. She does not, or cannot, appreciate the depth of your regard."

"You mistake," rejoined Charles. "When she throws aside the mask which etiquette compels her to wear, you will judge her differently. I should have thought as you do if I had only seen her in public. Her nature is tender and affectionate."

"Does she love you sufficiently to change her religion for you?" said the duke.

"I do not require her to make the change," replied the prince.

"But she is not equally considerate. Nothing less than your conversion will content her."

"She is under the governance of her confessor, and acts as he dictates," replied Charles.

"If such be the case—and there can be no

doubt that your highness is right—what chance have you of a favourable settlement of the affair? Either you must conform, or the prize will be withheld. That is the condition which will now be exacted. Put the Infanta to the proof to-morrow night, when you see her at the Buen Retiro."

"I will," said Charles.

"And if she disappoints you—if she insists upon your conversion?"

"I will return to England," replied the prince.

"Promise me that," said Buckingham.

"I promise it," replied Charles, emphatically. "To-morrow night the affair shall be decided."

"I am content," replied the duke, with secret exultation. "Under these circumstances it will be a satisfaction to your highness to learn that the fleet under the command of the Earl of Rutland has arrived off Santander. I have received a despatch from the noble admiral to that effect this

very morning. He hopes he may soon convey the bride to England. I have but little expectation that he will be gratified in that respect, but, at all events, he will be ready to take back your highness, and the presence of the fleet at this juncture is fortunate, for, depend upon it, Olivarez will not let you slip through his fingers, if he can help it. The Duke de Lerma warned us of his perfidy. Ever since we have been in Madrid he has been a secret enemy. He insulted me, and strove to humiliate me in the presence of the king and the state council. But I will requite him. I will lower his pride. I have it in my power to wound him in the tenderest point, and I will not spare him."

"What are you about to do?" inquired Charles, uneasily.

"He is very jealous of his wife," replied Buckingham, "and, sooth to say, the countess is lovely enough to make any man jealous. When I first beheld her, I was fascinated by her beauty, and

perhaps it was the admiration which I could not help expressing that gave me some interest in her eyes. Certain it is that she did not discourage my attentions. Perhaps she did no more than most married Spanish women do, but whatever hopes her manner towards me may have excited, I checked them."

"I am glad to hear that, at all events," observed Charles. "I feared the contrary."

"I checked them for a time," pursued the duke, and should have checked them altogether, if Olivarez had not affronted me. I considered how I could requite him, and soon perceived that vengeance was in my power. Your highness will guess my meaning."

Charles made no reply, and Buckingham went on:

"I paid assiduous court to the countess, and soon found that she was not likely to offer any desperate resistance to the attack. In fact, she did not resist

my advances, and it was quite clear that my conquest would be easily achieved."

"Had any one but yourself told me this, I would not have believed it," remarked Charles.

"To make an end of my relation," pursued Buckingham, "I have prevailed upon her to grant me an interview to-morrow night in the gardens of the Buen Retiro."

"Why there?" demanded Charles. "You will run great risk of discovery."

"I mean that the meeting *shall* be discovered—and by her husband," rejoined Buckingham.

"Such revenge is atrocious, Steenie," said Charles. "I trust you will forego the plan. If not for the Conde-Duque's sake, for that of the countess, who confides in you, do not bring disgrace upon a noble house."

"Well, I will reflect upon it," rejoined Buckingham.

Persuaded he had turned the duke from his vindictive purpose, Charles said no more on the subject, and shortly afterwards they went forth to ride in the valley of the Manzanares.

VII.

THE MASKED FÊTE AT THE BUEN RETIRO.

DESIGNED by Olivarez as a retreat for his youthful sovereign, charmingly situated, and embellished with the most refined taste, the summer palace, so appropriately denominated El Buen Retiro, had but recently been completed at the period of our history.

In this delicious retreat Philip cast off the cares of sovereignty, and spent hours in the companionship of Lope de Vega, Calderon de la Barca, and Velasquez. And here Olivarez put off the minister, and appeared only as a courtier.

The salons of the Buen Retiro were exquisitely furnished, and adorned with the choicest paintings. The gardens were enchanting—full of terraces, fountains, bosquets, orange-groves, flower-beds, parterres, pavilions, grassy slopes, and cool retreats.

On the night of the masked fête, at which we are about to assist, the assemblage numbered all the grandees and important personages of the court, including the Nuncio and the ambassadors, together with the English nobles and gentlemen in attendance upon Charles. The dresses were gorgeous, and jewels and precious stones were by no means confined to the female portion of the assemblage. The diamonds glittering on the attire of the Duke of Buckingham outshone those of any one present. All the company were provided with black velvet masks, which they assumed or laid aside at pleasure.

Dancing took place in a superb and brilliantly-lighted salon adapted for the purpose, and the ball

was opened by the king and the Infanta, who danced a bolero, and charmed the beholders with their skill and grace. Other couples stood up at the same time, and amongst them were the Duke of Buckingham and the Countess Olivarez, who executed the dance quite as gracefully as the royal pair.

A string of magnificent pearls, worn by Buckingham, broke during the dance, and this accident —if accident it was—afforded his grace an opportunity of presenting the gems to the fair bystanders, who had picked them up—a piece of gallantry that gained him great admiration. It was remarked that the duke's manner towards the countess was singularly impassioned.

Charles took no part in the dance, but remained with the queen, seated beneath a canopy. The fandango succeeded the bolero, and the cachucha the fandango, and the rattle of the castanets was still heard merrily as ever in the

ball-room, when the royal party, with a select portion of the company, proceeded to the theatre —for the Buen Retiro had its theatre, and a very charming little theatre too—where a comedy, written for the occasion by Lope de Vega, was admirably performed by the court actors.

The comedy, which was full of wit, and point, and intricate adventure, contained many allusions to the prince's chivalrous expedition to Madrid, and was loudly applauded; and at its conclusion the author received the compliments of the king and Charles, and was more substantially gratified by a purse of gold from the latter.

After the performance, the banqueting-chamber was thrown open, and a sumptuous repast served, of which the principal guests partook; but the royal party, including Charles, supped in a small oval chamber in private.

Supper over, the company went forth into the gardens, which were illuminated, and the trees

being hung with lamps of various hues, looked as if they bore such fruit as was grown in the orchards of the Hesperides. The night was magnificent, the moon being at the full, and the air perfectly calm.

About an hour before midnight there was a grand display of fireworks, which could be seen by the crowds assembled in the Prado; and after this the majority of the company returned to the ball-room, or to the banqueting-chamber, while a few, who preferred the open air, continued in the gardens.

All the marble seats along the terraces had occupants, and couples were moving slowly across the soft sward, listening, it may be, to the nightingales. However, we shall not pry into their discourse, but follow two graceful-looking señoras, who were proceeding down the long avenue of linden-trees leading to the lake. They moved too quickly to notice the magical effect produced by

the coloured lamps on the numerous statues lining the walk, and though they looked back occasionally, they did not pause till they reached the borders of the lake.

Here all was tranquil. The trees were gilded by the moonbeams, and the surface of the little lake glittered like silver. The calmness and serenity of the scene offered a strong contrast to the revel they had just quitted.

Shortly after the arrival of the two señoras, the dip of oars was heard in the water, and a boat was seen to issue from a little creek at the farther end of the lake, and make its way towards them. The bark was propelled by a couple of rowers, and two cavaliers were seated in the stern, one of whom touched the chords of a guitar, and chanted a serenade in a low sweet voice, as he came along.

In another minute the bark reached the spot where Doña Casilda and Doña Flor were stationed —for it will have been conjectured, we presume,

that they were the masked señoras—and De Cea and Graham leaped ashore. A few exclamations of delight were uttered, and then De Cea besought Doña Flor to embark with him, nor did it require much persuasion to induce her to assent. Before they entered the boat, it was agreed that the others should join them at the farther end of the lake.

Thus freighted, the boat cut its way through the moonlit water, but the tinkling of the guitar was no more heard.

Meanwhile, Graham and Casilda moved slowly on, keeping near the margin of the pool.

Lovers' discourse is idle, and scarcely worth repeating.

"Have you ever such lovely nights as this in England, Ricardo?" inquired Casilda. "Do the nightingales sing as sweetly in your groves? Is the air as balmy? And does the moon shine as brightly?"

"You will judge," replied Graham. "If you do

not like my country, you shall come back to Spain."

"Ah! I shall be happy with you anywhere, Ricardo," she replied. "But if I am to be yours, my flight must not be long delayed, or it will be impossible. I shall be forced into a marriage with Don Christobal."

"Nay, that shall never be," cried Graham. "You are mine—mine only, Casilda—and no hated rival shall rob me of my treasure. I yesterday acquainted the prince with my plan, but he disapproves it."

"But you will not be guided by him—you will not abandon me?" cried Casilda. "If you do, I shall die of despair."

"Fear nothing; I have no such thought. Even if I incur the prince's displeasure, and forfeit the Duke of Buckingham's favour, I will not swerve from my faith to you! Be prepared to-morrow night. I will scale the garden wall at midnight. You shall join me, and then——"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of caution; adding, in a low voice, "We are watched. There is some one among the trees."

"I can perceive no one," rejoined Graham, glancing in the direction indicated. "But it may be the prince. He was to meet the Infanta near the lake about this hour."

"You reassure me," she rejoined. "I feared it might be Don Christobal, and that he had overheard what we said. And yet that is not likely either, for we left him in the ball-room, about to join the dance."

In another moment they were buried in the shade of some trees that grew near the water, and as Graham cast a look backwards, he perceived two figures near the foot of the avenue, and drew Casilda's attention to them.

"Look!" he cried, "I was right. Yonder are the prince and the Infanta."

VIII.

THE MEETING BY THE LAKE.

AFTER the display of fireworks, Charles remained in the garden with the Earl of Bristol, Lord Kensington, and some other English nobles, and then, giving them to understand that he desired to be alone for a while, he left them, and walked down the avenue to the lake.

So beauteous was the scene, so steeped in calmness, that an immediate effect was produced upon his feelings, and almost forgetting why he had come thither, he fell into a delicious and dreamy reverie,

from which he was roused by light footsteps near him. Turning at the sound, he perceived two female figures, both wrapped in dark silk mantles, and masked.

As he advanced towards them, one of the ladies retired, and remained standing at a little distance.

"I have run great risk in keeping my appointment with you, prince," said the Infanta, as she removed her mask, "and I cannot stay more than a few minutes."

"Oh, say not so, Maria!" cried Charles. "This is a spot where hours might be spent in loving converse."

"You talk of hours as if time were at my command," she replied. "Were I to remain long, my absence from the palace would infallibly be discovered, and as it is, I am full of apprehension. But I must not waste time, for I have much to say to you."

"I am all attention. Say on, sweet princess.

Your voice is more charming to me than the song of the nightingales."

"What I have to say may not please you," she rejoined; "but all my future happiness depends upon your answer to the question I am about to put to you. You can guess it. You know the subject nearest my heart. You know towards what end my prayers are directed. Has Heaven enlightened you and moved your breast? Are you prepared to recant your errors, and embrace the true faith?"

A profound sigh was Charles's sole response.

"I must have an answer," she replied, withdrawing the hand he had taken.

"You say our meeting must necessarily be brief, Maria," he remarked. "Do not let us mar our happiness by this discussion. It is out of character with the spot—with the serene beauty of the night. Let us devote the few minutes we have together to love—to tender thoughts."

"But I cannot continue to love you, unless you will give me an assurance that you will conform," said the Infanta. "Why this hesitation? You have led me to suppose you would become a convert."

"Forgive the deception I have practised, Maria. It is love that has made me play the dissembler."

"Then you have deluded me with false hopes? You never intended to change your faith? Prince, such conduct is unworthy of you. But you cannot honourably retreat. I must hold you to your promise. Either you must become a convert, or our engagement is at an end. You must come to an immediate decision."

"But why drive matters to this fearful extremity, Maria?"

"The extremity is as fearful to me as to you, Charles," she rejoined. "Listen to what I say. I have solemnly promised the Nuncio, in the presence of my confessor, never to wed a heretic."

"Why did you do this, Maria?" cried Charles, in a voice of anguish.

"Because I believed you would become a convert. And you will, Charles—you will!" she exclaimed.

"I cannot," he rejoined.

"Then you are resolved to renounce me. You love me not!"

"Oh! say not so, Maria. I love you too well. But I cannot change my faith."

"Will not my entreaties move you? Can you be insensible to my anguish? Padre Ambrosio and the Nuncio will question me to-morrow. What shall I say to them? May I hold out any hopes?"

"None!—none!" he replied. "I have gone too far already."

"This, then, is your decision?" she cried.

"It is my final decision," he rejoined, sadly but firmly.

"All, then, is over!" said Maria. "My dream of happiness is ended!"

"Why should it be so?" cried Charles. "The Nuncio, if he pleases, can absolve you from your promise, however solemnly made—and perchance it was extorted from you. The king your brother and his cabinet do not impose any such terms. I have agreed to all their conditions."

"Be not deceived, Charles," she replied, sadly. "The marriage-treaty will never be concluded unless you concede this point. Such is Philip's secret resolution. He and Olivarez fully calculate upon your compliance. And you yourself have led them into the belief."

"I see my error now," rejoined Charles. "But it may be retrieved."

"No, that is impossible, if you persist in your resolution," she said.

A sudden interruption to their discourse was offered at this juncture by the lady in attendance

upon the Infanta, who, stepping quickly towards them, warned them that some one was at hand.

Scarcely had they resumed their masks, when two cavaliers emerged from the bosquet, and marched quickly up to them. As neither of these personages was masked, and their features were revealed by the bright moonlight, Charles knew them to be Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

"What means this interruption, señores?" he said, haughtily. "Retire."

"Not without these ladies," rejoined Don Christobal.

"You are mistaken, señor," said Charles. "Do you not see that you cause the ladies great alarm?"

"Possibly we may—but that cannot be helped," rejoined Don Christobal. "We are sorry to interrupt your tête-à-tête, but you must be pleased to excuse us. Come with me, señora!" he cried, seizing the Infanta's hand.

"And do you come with me, madam," added Don Pompeo, taking the hand of the other lady.

"Let go your hand instantly, señor, or, by Heaven, you will repent it!" cried Charles. "This lady desires to stay with me."

"That is easily to be perceived," rejoined Don Christobal. "But I do not intend she shall. Come along, madam!"

Don Pompeo at the same time tried to force away the other lady.

"Unhand me instantly, señor, I command you," cried the Infanta to Don Christobal.

"Not yet," he replied, with a laugh.

Finding there was no alternative, Maria took off her mask, and her features being thus revealed to the astonished Don Christobal, he instantly recognised the Infanta, and falling on his knee before her, he exclaimed, "Pardon, princess, pardon! I took you for Doña Casilda."

"And I took you for my wife, Doña Flor," cried

Don Pompeo to the other lady, who had likewise unmasked.

"You have been guilty of a great indiscretion, señores," said Charles, taking off his vizard. "But you must forget whom you have seen—do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied both cavaliers addressed; "your highness need have no apprehension."

At this moment voices were heard, and several persons were seen coming down the avenue.

"It is the king, with the Conde-Duque," said Don Christobal.

"The king! oh, Heavens! I shall be discovered," cried the Infanta.

"Take refuge in yonder pavilion, princess," said Don Christobal. "His majesty is not likely to visit it."

"Shall I go there?" said Maria to her attendant.

"No, no," replied the lady; "anywhere but there. Princess, you must not go."

"She must, or she will be discovered," cried Charles. "Try to detain the king for a moment, señores."

"We will," replied Don Christobal, hurrying off with Don Pompeo towards the avenue.

Charles then took the Infanta's hand, and would have conducted her to the pavilion, but the lady stopped them.

"Prince," she cried, "the Infanta must not enter that pavilion."

"But I will leave her at the door," rejoined Charles. "Do not hesitate, Maria."

"She shall not go, I repeat," said the lady, peremptorily.

"What is to be done?" cried the Infanta. "The king will be here in a moment."

"Have no fear, princess," rejoined the lady. "The Conde-Duque is with him."

"But I dare not meet my brother. I will hide somewhere," cried the Infanta. And she flew

towards a bosquet, followed by Charles and the lady.

Scarcely had they concealed themselves amongst the shrubs, when the boat containing Graham, De Cea, and the two ladies, crossed the lake, and landed its party.

IX.

HOW THE TABLES WERE TURNED UPON BUCKINGHAM.

When the king got to the foot of the avenue, he stopped, and said to Olivarez,

"I must now call upon your excellency to explain why you have brought me here?"

"Accompany me to yonder pavilion, and your curiosity shall be satisfied, sire," rejoined Olivarez.

"On, then, to the pavilion!" exclaimed Philip.

But he was stopped by Don Christobal, who, placing himself in the way, said, "I pray your majesty not to enter that pavilion."

"Why not?" demanded Philip.

"Because you will interrupt a tête-à-tête."

"Between whom?" demanded the king.

"Speak out," said Olivarez.

"Between two important personages," replied Don Christobal, scarcely knowing what he said. "Your excellency will be sorry if you do not take my advice," he added significantly to the Conde-Duque. "I have good reasons for offering it."

"A word with you, Don Christobal," said the king, taking him aside. "Answer me frankly, and you may prevent an unpleasant discovery."

"Such is my wish, sire," replied Don Christobal. "I am quite sure the discovery will be disagreeable to your majesty."

"But I must know who is in the pavilion."

"Excuse me, sire, I dare not inform you."

"I will have an answer," said Philip. "Is the countess there?"

"What countess, sire?"

"Do not equivocate. I ask you if the Countess Olivarez is in yonder pavilion?"

"I have reason to believe she is there, sire," replied Don Christobal, thinking she was the lady in attendance upon the Infanta.

"And the duke?"

"The duke, sire!"

"Ay, the Duke of Buckingham. You see I know it. His grace is there."

"Since your majesty will have it so, I will not presume to contradict you," replied Don Christobal, who was now completely mystified.

"Let us leave the pavilion unvisited, and return to the palace," observed the king to Olivarez. "I am satisfied with what I have just heard."

"But I am not," said the Conde-Duque. "And I must beg your majesty to go on with me."

"Nay, if you are determined, be it so," rejoined Philip.

And he proceeded with his attendants towards the pavilion.

On the way thither he encountered Graham and De Cea, and the two ladies with them.

Philip commanded the party to unmask, and the injunction being obeyed, a discovery ensued which resulted in Doña Casilda and Doña Flor being transferred to the care of Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

The king had hoped that the delay caused by this incident would give time to those within the pavilion to escape, and he was somewhat surprised when, as he approached the little structure, the door opened, and the Duke of Buckingham and a lady issued from it.

The lady was masked, but not so the duke.

The lady, whom Philip and several others felt certain was the Countess Olivarez, appeared embarrassed and uneasy, and clung to the duke's arm; but Buckingham manifested no concern. Making an obeisance to the king, he moved slowly on.

As he expected, however, he was stopped by Olivarez.

"I have a word to say to your grace," remarked the Conde-Duque.

"As many as your excellency pleases on some fitting occasion, but not now," replied Buckingham.

"All I desire to ask is whether you have been long in that pavilion?" said Olivarez.

"Your excellency is curious. Perhaps five minutes—perhaps ten—perhaps half an hour. I came there after the fireworks."

"And the lady has been with you all the time?" pursued Olivarez.

"That is a question I must really decline to answer," said Buckingham.

"Your grace is perfectly right," replied Philip.

"Stay!" cried Olivarez. "I have not yet done. I must beg the lady to unmask."

"The request is absurd," rejoined Buckingham. "Possibly her husband may be present."

"For that very reason I must insist," said Olivarez.

"I recommend you not to do so," remarked Philip. "Let them go on."

Olivarez, however, was not to be gainsaid, but called out:

"Madam, I order you to unmask."

"Hold, madam!" cried Buckingham. "Before you comply, let me say one word to his excellency."

"I will listen to no remarks," rejoined Olivarez. "Unmask, madam, unmask!"

"Save me! oh! save me!" exclaimed the lady, in piteous accents.

"I would willingly save you, but I have not the power," rejoined Buckingham. "Since his excellency commands you to unmask, you must comply. But he will regret his folly, when he finds it is his own wife."

"What, my lord duke!" exclaimed the king. "Would you have us believe this is the Countess Olivarez?"

"I would have you believe your own eyes, sire, not my assertion," replied Buckingham, with an exulting glance at Olivarez.

But his glance of triumph changed to one of confusion as the lady withdrew her mask, disclosing a young and handsome countenance.

The features, however, were not those of the Countess Olivarez.

A derisive laugh from the Conde-Duque, in which all the beholders joined, added to Buckingham's rage and mortification.

"Why, this is better than the comedy we have just witnessed," said Philip, laughing.

"I was one of the actresses in that comedy, sire," said the lady.

"Cheated by an actress!" exclaimed Buckingham.

"Yes, my lord duke, by an actress," rejoined Olivarez. "Madam, you may retire. Your part is played."

On this, the actress resumed her mask, and withdrew.

"Lope de Vega must have given you a hint for this plot," said the king, laughing.

"No, sire, the idea is entirely my own," replied Olivarez. "This is all the retaliation I mean to take upon the Duke of Buckingham for the injury he intended me."

"You have made me supremely ridiculous, that I admit, my lord," cried Buckingham. "But it is a pity the countess is not here to join in the laugh against me."

"The countess is here," she replied, stepping forward. "Are you satisfied, my lord?" she added, removing her mask.

"Oh, madam! how you have deceived me!" cried Buckingham.

"You have deceived yourself, my lord duke," rejoined the countess. "I revealed all to my husband, and we contrived this scheme to punish your presumption. Ha! ha! ha!"

Again there was a general laugh, in which Buckingham himself thought it best to join.

"Well, I own I have been fairly taken in," he said. "The Conde-Duque may congratulate himself upon the treasure he possesses. Henceforward he can never be jealous."

"I never have been jealous, my lord," said Olivarez, sharply. "Have I, madam?"

"You have had no cause for jealousy," she replied.

"Certainly, Lope de Vega must have had a hand in this," laughed the king. "But you have not explained how you chanced to be here, countess," he added.

"I came here with the Infanta, sire," she replied.

"What! is the Infanta here?" cried Philip.

"Yes, sire," she replied, stepping forward and unmasking.

"The comedy will never end," said Philip. "It would not surprise me to find that the prince himself has a part in it."

"Only that of spectator, sire," replied Charles, advancing.

"So you are here!" exclaimed Philip. "By Santiago! I must have some explanation."

"All shall be explained anon, and to your majesty's satisfaction," replied Olivarez. "Has the prince consented?" he added in a whisper to the Infanta.

"Alas! no!" she rejoined, in the same tone. "He refuses."

"Refuses!" exclaimed Olivarez. "He shall not quit Madrid till I have wrung consent from him. Sire, let us return to the palace. I shall have much to say to you to-morrow."

"Come with me, Maria," said Philip. "I shall not lose sight of you again."

The Infanta took the king's arm, and Charles walked on her other side, as they proceeded up the avenue to the palace.

End of the Fifth Book.

BOOK VI.

EL JUEGO DE CANAS.

I.

HOW CHARLES ANNOUNCED HIS DEPARTURE TO THE KING.

On the morning after the fête at the Buen Retiro, Philip, having made an appointment with the minister, drove to the palace, and, on entering his cabinet, found Olivarez and the Nuncio waiting for him.

"Your majesty will understand why I am here," said the Nuncio. "It is to confer with you in regard to the proposed marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Infanta. Acting by my advice, the Infanta obtained last night a decisive answer from the prince. He declines to conform."

"I lament to hear it," replied Philip. "His conversion would have been a great triumph to the faith, and the failure will be a deep disappointment to his Holiness."

"We have received a temporary check, but are not defeated," observed the Nuncio.

"How! Do you still indulge a hope of success?" cried the king.

"Most assuredly," replied the Nuncio; "but we must have recourse to more stringent measures. The Conde-Duque will inform your highness that the prince designs to return to England."

"Is this so?" asked Philip.

"Yes, sire," replied Olivarez. "The Duke of Buckingham informs me that his highness has just received a letter from King James, wherein his majesty complains of the delay in regard to the marriage, and enjoins his son's immediate return."

"But this you will not permit, sire," said the Nuncio.

"I see not how I can prevent it," replied Philip.

"Heaven has placed the prince in your hands," rejoined the Nuncio, "and you will be wanting to yourself, sire—you will be wanting in duty to our Church—if you allow him to depart without first accomplishing his conversion."

"But you tell me he has absolutely refused," said Philip. "I cannot force him into compliance."

"Time and persuasion may accomplish much," remarked the Nuncio, with a significant smile.

"This sudden change in the prince's sentiments has been wrought by Buckingham," observed Olivarez, "whose aim is now to break off the match. His highness showed every disposition to recant, and would have done so, but for the baneful representations of his favourite."

"The prince is perfectly tractable, I am convinced," remarked the Nuncio. "Get rid of Buckingham, and there will be no further difficulty."

"But how shall we get rid of him?" exclaimed Philip. "He will not leave without the prince."

"He must, and shall," said Olivarez.

"But Charles will not remain after his favourite's departure," remarked the king.

"Not voluntarily, perhaps, sire," rejoined Olivarez, significantly; "but he will stay, nevertheless."

"Detain him, sire," said the Nuncio. "Let him not escape from your hands, or you will be greatly to blame. His captivity—if captivity it can be called—will neither be irksome nor of long duration, for if the present adverse influence be removed, I will engage that his conversion shall be speedily accomplished. Your duty to the Church is paramount to every other consideration. I call upon you to assist in bringing back Charles Stuart to the fold."

Before Philip could make any reply, an usher announced the prince and the Duke of Buckingham.

"Be firm, sire," said the Nuncio, rising to depart.

"Stay," cried Philip. "I wish you to be present at this interview."

After the customary greetings had passed between Charles and the king, Philip remarked:

"Your highness, I understand, has just received a letter from the king your father?"

"I have, sire," replied Charles; "and it is in reference to that letter that I have come to your majesty. My immediate return to England appears absolutely necessary. The king my father complains sadly of my prolonged absence. His health is declining, as your majesty is aware, and he needs my attention. If there were any likelihood of an early completion of the marriage-treaty, his majesty would consent to my sojourn here till the affair could be settled, but as he cannot anticipate this, he has recalled me. I need not say that the necessity I am under of obeying his orders is a great grief to me, but I cannot

refuse compliance with them. I have therefore come to announce my early departure to your majesty, and to thank you for the truly royal hospitality you have shown me during my stay." After a brief pause, he added, "In regard to the marriage, I have this proposition to make. On the arrival of the dispensation, the ceremony can be performed by proxy, and I will entreat your majesty to be my representative on the occasion."

"I would fain hope that such a course may be avoided," said Olivarez. "If your highness departs while the treaty is still in abeyance, it will be thought that the marriage is broken off."

"Is there any chance that the marriage will take place soon?" said Buckingham.

"When we obtain the dispensation from his Holiness there shall be no further delay on our part," replied Olivarez.

"That has ever been the answer," said Buckingham. "My royal master's patience is exhausted,

and indeed he entertains the belief that the Pope will not grant the dispensation."

"There he is wrong, my lord duke," remarked the Nuncio. "His Holiness earnestly desires the fulfilment of the match, and will promote it to the utmost of his power. I authorise you to convey my assurance to King James, that so far as the Sovereign Pontiff is concerned there shall be little further delay. The affair, I hope, will be speedily settled."

"But upon what terms?" demanded Buckingham.

"Upon terms that will be perfectly satisfactory to the prince, I make no doubt," said the Nuncio.

"His highness must feel grateful for the Pope's consideration," said Buckingham.

"I entreat your highness to continue my guest a little longer," said Philip. "Your sudden departure will distress the Infanta, and on her account I urge you to stay, if only for a few weeks, when

I trust the matter may be completed. The Duke of Buckingham can proceed to England at once. His presence will be a consolation to your royal father, and he can give the king assurance of your speedy arrival with your bride."

"Can I, with safety, give him such assurance, sire?" asked the duke.

"Most certainly," interposed Olivarez.

"Does this arrangement meet with your highness's approval?" said Buckingham, addressing Charles. "Am I to go alone? I do not think the king your father will be satisfied."

"I am sure he will not," said Charles. "Despite the inducements held out to me by your majesty, I must therefore adhere to my plan."

"Your highness will do wrong to depart," said the Nuncio. "Let the Duke of Buckingham go first, as proposed by his majesty."

"On all accounts I urge your highness to stay for a brief period," added Olivarez.

"You will not disoblige me by leaving me thus suddenly, prince," said Philip. "I really cannot part with you."

"But I cannot disobey the king my father, sire. He has recalled me."

"Send word by his grace that I will not let you go," said Philip.

"Were I to send such a message as that, he would think I am detained," replied Charles.

"What matter if he should think so?" remarked Olivarez.

"Prince," said Buckingham to Charles, "you were entrusted to my charge by your royal father. I cannot consent that you should remain here after my departure. You have been summoned by the king, and must return to England."

"Must return!" echoed Olivarez. "Your presumption goes too far, my lord. I trust his highness will convince you that you have no authority over him."

"Your excellency had best speak out," said Buckingham, "and tell his highness, in plain terms, that he is a prisoner. If such be the case, I am a prisoner likewise, for I shall not depart without him."

"You will leave Madrid within twenty-four hours, my lord duke," said Philip.

"With the prince, sire?"

"Alone," rejoined the king.

"I cannot misunderstand this injunction, sire," said Charles. "I now see the position in which I have placed myself. I came here because I believed —and would have maintained the belief, if called upon—that Philip IV. of Spain was the soul of loyalty and honour. It seems I was mistaken."

"His majesty acts by my advice, prince," said Olivarez. "He knows that the Duke of Buckingham is animated by a spirit of determined hostility to himself and his cabinet—that he is secretly opposed to the match—and desiring that you should

not be subjected to such baneful influence, he removes him. If his majesty seeks to detain you for a short time longer, it is merely in the hope—in the belief, indeed—that all will be satisfactorily arranged."

"Are you willing to remain, prince?" said Philip.

"Your majesty has prevented me from answering the question," said Charles.

"Hear me, sire," said Buckingham. "The English fleet has arrived off Santander. I scarcely think the Earl of Rutland, who commands it, will be willing to sail without the prince."

"His majesty will treat that threat with the scorn it deserves," remarked Olivarez, disdainfully.

"The prince shall leave Spain in any manner he pleases," said Philip.

"Sire!" exclaimed Olivarez.

"The prince, I repeat, is free to depart now, or

at any time," said Philip. "Far be it from me to detain him against his inclinations."

"Then I have misunderstood you, sire," cried Charles.

"You have," replied Philip, disregarding the looks addressed to him by Olivarez and the Nuncio. "If I have displayed over-anxiety to detain you, it has been from the belief that we could arrange the matter. But I will say no more on this head. I leave the decision entirely to yourself. If your departure is abrupt, it will be thought that our good understanding has been interrupted. Stay with me a week longer, and I shall be content."

"I will gladly do so," replied Charles, "but I cannot send away the Duke of Buckingham."

"Let him stay, then," said Philip.

"All chance of accomplishing our object is at an end," whispered Olivarez to the Nuncio.

"Something may be done in a week," rejoined the latter.

"Not since Buckingham is allowed to remain," said Olivarez.

"I am sorry to lose you so soon, prince," said Philip, "but I will do my best to make the remainder of your stay agreeable to you."

"Your majesty has done far too much already," returned Charles. "I shall write to the king my father announcing my immediate return."

Making an obeisance to the king, he then withdrew with Buckingham.

II.

THE CLOAK AND THE SWORD.

MIDNIGHT.

A coach drove into the Prado, and set down two cavaliers, who, bidding the coachman await their return, proceeded along the footpath leading in the direction of the Puerta de Recoletos.

They were muffled in their cloaks, and wore their hats pulled over the brow, so as effectually to conceal their features. That they were bound upon some amorous errand was certain. Each carried a dark lantern beneath his mantle, and one of them

was provided with a rope-ladder. The points of their long rapiers appeared below their cloaks.

They moved along in silence, unconscious that they were cautiously followed by two other persons muffled in cloaks like themselves, and armed in like manner, who had issued from among the trees skirting the road.

At length the foremost gallants came to a large casa, in front of which was a garden surrounded by high walls like those of a convent. In this wall there was a gate, which they tried, hoping it might be left unfastened, but it did not yield. They next glanced around, but could perceive no one, for those who followed had concealed themselves.

Apprehending no danger, the gallants proceeded with their work. Quickly securing the rope-ladder to the top of the wall, they mounted, drew the ladder after them, and descended on the other side.

As soon as they had disappeared, the two per-

sons who were watching them came up, and one of them remarked to the other:

"Rose's information was correct. They are about to make the attempt."

"Shall we give the alarm?" rejoined the other.

"No, let us wait here," returned the first speaker. "They are sure to come out by this gate."

Leaving them to keep watch, we will now follow the two gallants, who had obtained admittance to the garden.

Moving with noiseless footsteps, and keeping close to the wall, they proceeded towards the casa, but on nearing it could discern no sign that they were expected. All seemed buried in repose. They did not dare to give any signal to make known their presence, but waited patiently.

At last the slight creaking of a casement announced that some one was coming forth, and in

another moment a female figure, wrapped in a mantilla, and with her features concealed by a black velvet mask, was seen upon the terrace.

Not doubting for a moment that it was Casilda whom he beheld, Graham flew towards her, and would have given utterance to a few passionate words expressive of his delight, but she checked him by a gesture imposing silence, and they then hurried towards the garden gate.

"Have you the key?" asked Graham, as they reached it.

Without a word she gave it to him, and in another moment the gate was unlocked.

"Now you are mine—mine only, Casilda," cried Graham. "You quit your father's house to become my bride."

Even to this address the masked female made no reply, and the door being opened, Graham started back, on perceiving the two cavaliers stationed outside.

"Confusion!" he exclaimed. "We are discovered. What is to be done?"

For a moment he remained irresolute, not knowing whether to advance or retreat, but then deciding upon the bolder course, he cried:

"Who are you, señores?—and what do you want?"

"Who we are matters little," replied a voice, which Graham at once recognised as that of Don Christobal. "We are here to protect the Conde Saldana from robbers."

"We are caballeros, as we will quickly convince you, not robbers," rejoined Graham, haughtily.

"The Conde de Saldana will account you the worst of robbers, for you are attempting to steal from him his chief treasure—his daughter. Luckily, we have been informed of your purpose, and are in time to prevent it."

"We have allowed you to proceed thus far with your project, in order that you should not be able

to deny it," said the other, whose voice proclaimed him to be Don Pompeo.

"Rose has betrayed us! Fool that I was to trust her!" cried Graham. "Our scheme is defeated," he added in a low voice to the masked female. "Regain the house as quickly as you can, and leave us to settle with them."

But she clung to him as if she could not tear herself away.

"Forgive me for what I have done, Sir Richard," she murmured. "I was impelled to it by jealousy."

"This is not Casilda's voice," cried Graham, starting. "Unmask yourself at once, señora, and satisfy my doubts."

And as the damsel tremblingly obeyed, he held his lantern towards her, and discovered the features of Rose.

"Rose!" he exclaimed. "Malediction! have I been duped?"

"How is this, Don Ricardo?" cried Don Christobal, laughing derisively. "You have got the maid instead of the mistress."

"A capital jest," laughed Don Pompeo. "You have been fairly tricked, Don Ricardo—ha! ha! ha!"

"You shall find it no jest, I can promise you, señores," cried Graham, fiercely. "Away, minion!" he added to Rose, who fled towards the house.

No sooner was he freed from her, than Graham drew his rapier, and springing through the gate, confronted the others. He was followed by De Cea, who closed the gate after him.

On seeing them advance in this hostile fashion, Don Christobal and Don Pompeo stepped back a few paces, drew their rapiers, and stood on guard.

"If I am not mistaken, the Duke de Cea is with you, señor," cried Don Pompeo.

"I am here," rejoined the duke.

"I am glad of it," said Don Pompeo. "I have an account to settle with you."

"You shall find me prompt to discharge it," said De Cea.

While these few words were exchanged, rapid preparations had been made on either side for the conflict.

Graham and De Cea threw their cloaks on the ground, but each retained his dark lantern. Their adversaries unfastened their mantles, but held them on the left arm for use, offensive and defensive, in the fight.

"Do not neglect my instructions, amigo," said De Cea in a low tone to Graham.

"Fear nothing," replied the other.

"Come on, Don Ricardo, I am ready for you," cried Don Christobal.

"And I for you, duke," added Don Pompeo to De Cea.

"We will not keep you waiting, señores," replied those addressed.

In another moment all four were engaged.

To any one who could have witnessed the conflict it would have been a curious sight. Graham held his lantern before him so as to throw its light upon his adversary, who awaited his attack with his cloak loosely wrapped round his left arm. It soon became evident that Don Christobal was very expert in the use of the cloak, for he contrived to obstruct all Graham's thrusts with it, and nearly succeeded in flinging it over his antagonist's head.

On his side, Graham, who had been well schooled by De Cea, resorted to many dexterous manœuvres to perplex his opponent. Sometimes, he presented the lantern above his head—then held it in front—anon, after hiding it for a time behind his back, he produced it unexpectedly at the side, dazzling his antagonist with the light.

All this time the combatants were interchanging rapid passes, but as yet neither had sustained any injury.

At length, however, Don Christobal, fatigued with the weight of his cloak, dropped his left arm for a moment to rest it, and his foot becoming entangled in the mantle, he fell just as he was in the act of making a lounge.

Of course he was now entirely at Graham's mercy, but the latter disdained to take advantage of the accident, and allowed him to rise, offering to renew the combat, but this Don Christobal declined.

Meantime, the conflict continued between De Cea and Don Pompeo, and threatened a serious termination, both adversaries being evidently infuriated, when shouts were heard, and a patrol could be seen hurrying to the spot.

"Fly! fly!" cried Don Christobal. "The watch are upon us. We shall all be arrested."

But the combatants were too much excited to heed the warning, and were still furiously engaged, when the patrol, consisting of a dozen men

and an officer, all well armed, came up, and rushing between them, beat down their blades.

As not unfrequently happened on such occasions, those who had just been engaged in deadly strife now united together in an attack upon the watch.

In the struggle that ensued, Don Christobal's sword was broken, and being thus rendered defenceless, he was seized by the watch, who attempted to carry him off.

Just at the same moment Don Pompeo was overpowered and disarmed. Both cavaliers called out to their late opponents to rescue them, and they did not call in vain, for Graham and De Cea threw themselves with such fury on the patrol, that the latter were compelled to let go their captives.

All four then took to flight, speeding off in different directions, and, though the patrol attempted pursuit, they did not succeed in making a capture.

III.

HOW GRAHAM AND DE CEA WENT TO THE ESCORIAL.

ALMOST in a state of distraction at the misadventure of the preceding night, Graham repaired, next day, to the Casa Saldana, determined, if possible, to obtain an interview with Casilda. But on his arrival at the casa, he ascertained, to his infinite vexation, that the conde had quitted Madrid at an early hour that morning, taking with him his daughter and her attendant, Rose.

Thus baffled, he sought De Cea. The young duke was as much perplexed as himself, having

just discovered by means of his confidential valet, who was accustomed to convey billets to her, that Doña Flor had likewise quitted Madrid early that morning with her husband. The utmost mystery was observed in regard to their movements, no one appearing to know whither they were gone. Little doubt, however, was felt by De Cea that they had accompanied the conde and Casilda. All communication, therefore, was completely cut off between the lovers.

"Your chance is over, I fear, amigo," observed De Cea. "Like your prince, you will be obliged to quit Spain without a wife. By this time, you may depend upon it, the old conde has put it out of your power to trouble him further, by wedding his daughter to Don Christobal."

"But Casilda would never consent to such a step!" cried Graham. "She detests Don Christobal."

"Doña Flor detests Don Pompeo," rejoined De

Cea; "but still he is her husband. You must bear the misfortune with philosophy."

"I came to you for aid and comfort in my distress," cried Graham. "But you drive me to despair."

"What would you have me say or do? I cannot give you false hopes. You have lost your mistress. But you have yourself to blame. You ought not to have trusted Rose."

"I see my error now it is too late," rejoined Graham, with a groan.

"Well, it will teach you caution, should you ever again be similarly circumstanced," remarked De Cea.

"That is impossible," cried Graham. "I can never love again."

"You think so now, but the wound will soon heal," rejoined De Cea. "I feel very disconsolate myself, but I have not come to the conclusion that Doña Flor is my last love. A ride in the Prado

will turn your thoughts into a new channel, and help to cheer you."

Graham assented to the proposition, though he had little hope of relief from it. As they were riding along the Calle de Alcala, they encountered Don Christobal, who was likewise on horseback. He eyed them sternly as they passed him.

"Are you still of the same opinion now?" remarked Graham to the young duke. "Do you believe he is married to Casilda?"

"I know not what to think," replied De Cea. "But I will have him watched."

The surveillance under which Don Christobal was placed by De Cea produced no satisfactory result. The object of it went about just as usual, appeared daily at court, rode in the Prado in the evening, and attended all the entertainments given by the king. But he declined to answer any inquiries as to the Conde de Saldana and his daughter.

Five days thus passed by—five anxious days to Graham—and still he had obtained no tidings whatever of Casilda, and as the period of the prince's departure was close at hand, he began to fear he should quit Spain without beholding her again.

On the afternoon of the sixth day he was alone in his chamber at the palace, brooding upon his griefs, when a damsel, draped in a mantilla, suddenly entered.

Supposing it to be Casilda, he uttered a joyful cry, and started to his feet, but he was quickly undeceived, as the damsel disclosed her features.

"Rose!" he exclaimed, in anger and disappointment. "What brings you here? Are you come to rejoice over the misery you have caused? Be satisfied—your vengeance is complete."

"Think better of me," she rejoined. "I was goaded to what I did by jealousy. Listen to me for a few moments, and then pour all your rage

upon me, if you please. Words cannot tell the force of the passion I have felt for you. My love has been utterly unrequited, but the flame, though it had nothing to feed upon but my own heart, did not become extinguished, but burnt fiercely as ever. I tried to smother it, but in vain. You should have pity for me, Sir Richard, for the pangs of jealousy are hard to bear, and mine were intolerable."

"I cannot pity you—I cannot forgive you," said Graham, sternly. "You have wronged me too deeply."

"Hear me out, and then judge me," she rejoined. "To understand my conduct, you must place yourself in my position. You must know how fierce and ardent is my nature. Loving you as I did, I could not bear that another should possess you. Regardless of all consequences to myself, to you, and to Doña Casilda, I betrayed your plan, and the elopement was prevented."

"You avow your perfidy, and yet hope for forgiveness!" cried Graham. "Expect it not."

"What made me perfidious? What made me seek revenge? Love—love for you, Sir Richard—jealousy of Doña Casilda."

"Well, be content. You have wreaked your vengeance upon us both. Trouble me no more, but depart."

"A few words more, and I have done. I shall never see you again, Sir Richard, and I therefore desire to set myself right with you. I am not the base, vindictive creature you imagine, but a hapless, loving girl, who has been tortured well-nigh to madness by jealousy. Doña Casilda has forgiven me. Why should not you forgive me?"

"Can you undo the mischief you have done?" cried Graham.

"I can," she replied. "I have come to tell you so."

"Is Casilda not wedded to Don Christobal?" demanded Graham.

"She is not—she may still be yours."

"Heaven be thanked for the intelligence!" cried Graham. "But can I believe you? You have deceived me once."

"You may trust me now," she rejoined. "I have repented of my conduct, and am anxious to repair the wrong I have done. I must render justice to Doña Casilda. I thought her incapable of devoted affection to you, but I was mistaken. She has convinced me that she loves you truly. When you learn what has occurred since that unlucky night, you will think so."

"Speak! I am all attention," cried Graham.

"Hear me, then, with patience," said Rose, "and reserve your reproaches till I have done. I own that I told the Conde de Saldana that you were about to carry off his daughter, and I also acquainted Don Christobal and Don Pompeo with the intended elopement. To prevent all possibility of escape, Doña Casilda was locked in her chamber,

and I was permitted by the conde to personate her. Within an hour after the fray at the garden gate, the Conde de Saldana, Doña Casilda, and myself, had quitted the casa, and were posting along—none but the conde knew whither.

"Arrived at a small venta, we came to a halt, but did not alight from the carriage in which we travelled, and the cause of our stoppage was presently explained by the arrival of another coach, containing Don Pompeo and Doña Flor. Then we set forward again, but had not proceeded more than half a league, when we were overtaken by a horseman. It was Don Christobal. But he did not accompany us far. Doña Casilda refused to speak to him, and after a brief discourse with the conde, he returned to Madrid. We then pursued our way without further interruption, and early in the morning reached our destination, which proved to be the Escorial."

"The Escorial!" exclaimed Graham. "Is Ca-

silda there? I have sought in vain to discover her retreat."

"She has been at the Escorial ever since that night," rejoined Rose; "but precautions were taken by the conde to baffle your search, and that of the Duke de Cea. As Doña Flor was brought away at the same time by her husband, no communications could be made by her to the young duke. The marriage you dread so much would have taken place ere this, but for Doña Casilda's illness. The excitement she had gone through brought on fever. For two days her life was despaired of—and, indeed, she declared she would prefer death to a union with Don Christobal. Fortunately, no such sad fate awaited her, and I trust she is reserved for happier days. By careful nursing, Doña Flor and myself succeeded in bringing her through the crisis of the fever, and she is now perfectly recovered."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed Graham, who had listened with deep interest to Rose's nar-

ration. "But surely the conde's heart must now be touched, and he will no longer insist upon wedding her to one whom she hates."

"The conde is a slave to his word," replied Rose, "and though bitterly deploring the necessity of the step, he holds himself bound to give his daughter to Don Christobal, unless he shall be released from his promise. If nothing happens to prevent it, the marriage will take place to-night."

"To-night!" exclaimed Graham. "To-night!"

"Ay, to-night," she repeated. "It was to tell you this that I came here. Had I been able to communicate with you before, I would have done so. But it was impossible. By the conde's order I have never been allowed to quit the palace since we arrived there. This morning, by the aid of Doña Flor, who induced a monk to let me out, I was able to effect my escape, and as I had money enough for the purpose I hired a coach, and drove off at once to Madrid."

"To-night!" exclaimed Graham, bewildered by

the intelligence he had received. "You say the marriage is to take place to-night. Where is Don Christobal? He was here—in Madrid—yesterday."

"He may be here still, for aught I know," she replied. "But he will be at the Escorial to-night."

"Unless prevented — unless prevented," cried Graham.

"The marriage will be strictly private," continued Rose. "None will be present at it save Don Pompeo and Doña Flor."

"One not expected may be present," rejoined Graham.

"If you appear I do not think the marriage can take place," said Rose. "But now I have fulfilled my errand. I have told you all I had to say. Do you forgive me?"

"From my heart," he rejoined.

"Enough! that is all I ask. May you be suc-

cessful, Sir Richard! May you overcome all difficulties, and win your bride! And when you *have* won her, may you be happy with her!"

"Will you go with me to the Escorial, Rose? You may be of use?"

"No, my task is over. We must never meet again, Sir Richard—never! I have mastered my feelings, but I could not trust myself near you."

"Perhaps it is better so," sighed Graham. "Farewell, Rose. Take this purse, I entreat you."

"I take it, because I need money to return to France. Farewell for ever, Sir Richard! Think sometimes upon one whose fault has been that she loved you too well! Think of her, and pity her!"

Without waiting for a reply, she quitted the room.

Graham's first business was to seek the Duke de Cea, to whom he imparted what Rose had told him.

After some minutes' reflection, De Cea said:

"Well, you may as well make up your mind to it. Doña Casilda will be married to-night."

"But I cannot make up my mind to it," cried Graham. "I will stay the marriage."

"You cannot stay it. It is written in the book of fate."

"A truce to this jesting! It is ill timed," cried Graham, angrily. "Will you assist me?—will you accompany me to the Escorial?"

"I will," replied De Cea. "But I am not jesting when I assert that Casilda will be wedded to-night; but I do not say she will be wedded to Don Christobal."

"Ha! I see—but do you think that possible?"

"I think it certain, or I would not hold out the hope. Casilda shall be yours to-night."

"Oh, my dear friend!" exclaimed Graham, joyfully, "you raise me from despair. You make me the happiest of men."

"Calm yourself, amigo. A good deal has to be done before the object can be accomplished, and

you are not in a fit state to undertake it. Indeed, if you meddle in the matter it will fail—as certainly as the late attempt at elopement failed. Leave the affair to me, and I will answer for the result."

"I put myself in your hands. You shall have the entire management of the business," said Graham. "But let us start for the Escorial at once."

"I shall not be ready for an hour," said De Cea, with provoking calmness.

"Not for an hour!" cried Graham, impatiently. "I cannot wait so long."

"You had better wait than lose Casilda."

"Well, well—I will do anything you enjoin," said Graham.

"My injunctions then are, that you amuse yourself in the best way you can for an hour, and then return to me. It is now four o'clock. At five I shall expect you."

"At five to a moment I will be here," said Graham.

"Do not trouble yourself further about Don Christobal. You will mar my project if you at all interfere."

"I resign myself entirely to your guidance. I will not even question you further."

"Good! then we shall succeed. Au revoir!"

Graham returned at the appointed time, and found De Cea ready for departure.

Shortly afterwards, the two young men, mounted on fleet Andalusian horses, and followed by half a dozen lacqueys in De Cea's superb livery, had passed through the Puerta de Segovia, and were galloping along the valley of Manzanares.

Ere long they entered upon an arid waste, which seemed to grow more dreary and desolate as they advanced. Burnt to a dark red crust by the scorching sun, the ground was strewn with enormous granite boulders. With the exception of an occasional solitary venta, not a single habitation was to be seen on the road.

The savage region was bounded on the right by the lofty range of the Guadarrama, and it was towards the foot of this mountainous barrier that the horsemen were riding.

Nearer and nearer they approached the mountains, and after half an hour's gradual ascent reached a higher elevation, whence the whole of the stony region they had tracked could be discerned.

But the country here was just as stern and savage as they had just quitted. Nothing showed that they were near one of the grandest palaces in Spain; there were no noble domains, no woods, no park, no circling wall. All was waste as before—parched, tawny ground, covered with rocks, and rugged picturesque mountains towering in front, and seeming to check farther progress in that direction.

But the cavaliers had now nearly accomplished their rapid journey. A lofty crucifix, planted on the summit of a huge rounded grey boulder, and

from the singularity of its position producing a most striking effect, told them they had reached the precincts of the wondrous convent-palace reared by Philip II.

Not far from the crucifix, which was regarded with becoming reverence by De Cea and the lacqueys, there was a large elaborately-wrought iron gateway, adorned with the arms of Castile and Aragon. Passing through it, and entering a sort of park, the horsemen rode on, and presently reached an eminence, whence a stupendous granite pile burst upon their gaze. The numerous gilded vanes, the lofty quadrangular towers, the steep sloping roofs, and grand central cupola of the mighty edifice—then, and indeed now, the largest structure in Spain—were lighted up by the beams of the setting sun. But the lower parts of the structure looked stern and sombre as the rugged mountains by which it was surrounded; and ere Graham had gazed at it for a few minutes, the

radiance had disappeared, and left the whole mass gloomy and grey.

Shortly afterwards they dismounted, and consigning the horses to the lacqueys, who proceeded with them to the royal stables, the two young men walked towards the principal entrance of the palace. Above the noble gateway were carved the royal arms of Spain, and above this vast stone escutcheon, in a niche, was set a statue of San Lorenzo, holding the instrument of his martyrdom in one hand, and a book in the other. Two gridirons were also sculptured in bold relief over the doorway.

The monastic character of the edifice was proclaimed to Graham by the numerous friars who were seen crossing it, or pacing to and fro along the cloisters.

But De Cea did not loiter in the court, but proceeded at once to the church.

IV.

THE TOURNAMENT WITH CANES.

DESIROUS to show his royal guest as much honour on his departure as he had done on his arrival, Philip commanded a fresh series of festivities, which lasted without interruption for five days.

The concluding pageant, designed to eclipse all the previous shows in splendour, was a tournament with canes—an exhibition, borrowed from the Moors, in which the Spanish chivalry delighted. Accordingly, lists were prepared in the principal court of the palace.

All the windows and balconies overlooking the court were decorated with tapestry and costly stuffs, and gorgeous canopies, embroidered with the royal arms, and adorned with curtains of cloth of gold and silver, were prepared for the queen and the Infanta, and all the principal ladies of the court.

When these windows and balconies were occupied by cavaliers and dames in their richest apparel, when the queen and the Infanta, or as she was now styled, the Princess of England, took their seats beneath the canopy designed for them, nothing could be more brilliant than the scene. The whole of the space outside the lists was filled with cavaliers in magnificent liveries, and the eye ranged over a forest of nodding plumes of various hues.

As usual, the Infanta was attired in white satin, and her sole ornaments were pearls; but she looked pale, and traces of anxiety were visible in her countenance. It was noticed also by the

meninas who stood behind her, and by others who had an opportunity of closely watching her, that she took little interest in the spectacle.

The queen, however, appeared very lively, and seemed delighted with the show. She was magnificently dressed in silver brocade, and glittered with diamonds. Charles, who occupied a chair between her majesty and the Infanta, was attired in white satin, with black and white plumes in his hat. He wore the Order of the Garter, suspended by a broad blue riband from his neck, and the enamelled Garter round his knee. Like the Infanta, he looked grave and sad.

When all the company had assembled, as we have related, a band of trumpets, drums, kettle-drums, and clarions, rode into the arena, making the court ring with their stirring strains. The men wore cassocks, embroidered with the royal arms, and were mounted on splendidly caparisoned horses.

After them followed the king's chief equerry, all his majesty's riders and pages in carnation-coloured satin, walking uncovered before a superbly equipped charger, intended for the king's use in the tournament. On either side of the steed, which looked proud of its magnificent trappings, walked two grooms of the stable, and behind followed as many farriers, carrying pouches of crimson velvet. Then came a troop of fifty cavaliers resplendent in the royal livery, mounted on bright bay horses, trapped in black and white velvet, with white bridles and silver musrols. The horses were covered with crimson velvet horse-cloths, embroidered with the king's name and the royal arms. The troop was followed by forty youths attached to the royal stables, gallantly attired in doublets of carnation taffeta, and carrying the king's mounting-steps, which were made of ebony, covered with carnation taffeta fringed with gold.

Then came twelve mules of the largest size, each led by a couple of grooms, and sumptuously caparisoned in crimson velvet, embroidered with the royal arms, having silver bridles, silver bits, and silver poitrels, while their heads were adorned with lofty carnation and black plumes, striped with silver. These mules made a most gallant show, and formed the most curious part of the procession, as they were laden with bundles of canes, tipped with blunt iron points, intended to be used in the approaching skirmish.

Then followed four more trumpeters, doing their devoir, and after them came riders, grooms, and pages, in the livery of the Conde de Olivarez, conducting the steed belonging to his excellency, which was superbly trapped for the occasion. Then came a troop of fifty horsemen, all clad in the Conde-Duque's livery, and carrying white targets with white bandels.

Next came another squadron, headed by the

Admiral of Castile, and apparelled in his livery of black satin guarded with gold lace. These cavaliers carried black targets with devices of gold.

A fourth squadron followed arrayed in white satin laced and flowered with silver, and carrying silver bucklers. These were headed by the Conde de Monterey.

Two other troops succeeded, clad in the liveries of their leaders, and provided with bucklers having various devices. These were respectively commanded by Don Pedro de Toledo and the Duke de Sessa.

All these squadrons drew up in the first instance in the centre of the arena, and remained there until the king came forth from a pavilion placed at the extremity of the lists.

His majesty was attired in a riding suit of black taffeta, which became him well, and wore black and white plumes in his hat. He was accompanied by the Infante Don Carlos, who wore habiliments

similar to those of his majesty, and by the Conde de Olivarez, who was attired in orange-tawny velvet.

As soon as Philip came forth, the grooms led his charger towards him, the steps were placed, and his majesty, who needed little help, was ceremoniously assisted to mount by the Conde de Olivarez.

On gaining the saddle, the king bowed graciously in reply to the acclamations of the assemblage, and then rode towards the centre of the arena, whither he was followed by Don Carlos and Olivarez, as soon as they had mounted their steeds.

Meanwhile, canes had been distributed among the horsemen, and one of these slender javelins, light as a reed, together with a buckler, were delivered to his majesty by his equerry. On coming up, Don Carlos and Olivarez were similarly armed.

All being then in readiness, the trumpets sounded, and three squadrons wheeling round with

great quickness, the king put himself at their head, and galloped with them to the upper extremity of the arena, where they faced about and stood still.

Simultaneously, a corresponding movement was executed with equal skill and rapidity by the three other squadrons, under the command of Olivarez. These posted themselves at the opposite end of the arena, facing the king's troops.

Again the trumpets sounded, and upon the instant the king and Olivarez rode against each other with extraordinary swiftness. Bending over their horses' necks like Moslems, they met in mid-career, shivering their javelins against each other's bucklers.

Ere turning, fresh lances were furnished them, and as they met again, Philip rose suddenly in his saddle, and delivered a downward thrust, which Olivarez caught upon his target.

In the third encounter they hurled their canes against each other, and the king's aim being the

best, he was adjudged the victor. Great applause followed this chivalrous feat, which was admirably performed.

Other courses were then run between Don Carlos and the Marquis de Carpio, the Admiral of Castile and Don Pedro de Toledo, and the Duke de Sessa and the Conde de Monterey. No disaster occurred, and the prowess of the champions elicited loud applause.

These encounters between the leaders having come to an end, the opposing troops prepared for the grand mêlée. The squadrons on either side extended so as to form two lines, and this was no sooner done than the trumpets sounded a charge.

Holding aloft their slender javelins, striking spurs in their steeds, and shouting furiously, the opposing hosts, respectively led by the king and Olivarez, dashed against each other, producing all the effect of a battle-charge. The ground quaked beneath the horses' feet. The shock when they

met was terrible, and the splintering of the canes sounded like the crackling of trees. Several cavaliers were unhorsed, but none were much hurt, and all were quickly in the saddle again.

Fresh lances being speedily furnished to the horsemen, another charge took place, and amid a tremendous crackling of canes a dozen or more warriors rolled in the dust. As almost all of these owned Olivarez for leader, shouts were raised for the king.

As soon as the horsemen were in a condition to renew the conflict, they were arrayed against each other by their leaders, and a third charge was made. But this time a skilful manœuvre was executed by Olivarez. As the opposing force rushed against him, he opened his lines and let them pass through, and then, turning quickly, attacked them in the rear, and put them to flight, pursuing them round the arena.

This flight and pursuit constituted the most

exciting part of the spectacle, inasmuch as it not only gave the cavaliers an opportunity of displaying their horsemanship, but occasioned a great number of single combats, which were conducted with wonderful spirit.

In the end, Philip succeeded in rallying his scattered troops, and made a final charge against his opponent. The advantage he thus gained was so decisive, that by the general voice he was proclaimed the victor, and shouts resounded on all sides of "Viva el Rey! Dios guarde al Rey!"

The trumpets again sounded, the squadrons reformed with wonderful quickness, and then quitted the arena, under the command of their respective leaders, in as perfect order as if no engagement had taken place.

Philip and Olivarez remained to the last, and as his majesty rode out of the arena, the acclamations of the beholders were renewed. Having dismounted, the king repaired to the royal canopy,

where he received the congratulations of Charles, who had been greatly delighted with the spectacle.

The royal party then adjourned to the palace. An hour later a sumptuous banquet was served, at which all the principal lords and ladies of the court sat down. After the banquet, the grand suite of apartments were thrown open, and a ball concluded the festivities of the day.

End of the Sixth Book.

BOOK VII.

THE ESCORIAL.

I.

THE CHURCH OF THE ESCORIAL.

THE royal edifice of San Lorenzo of the Escorial, to which we must now return, cost its "holy founder," as Philip II. was termed by the grateful monks whom he lodged there, upwards of six millions of ducats in construction and embellishment. Its design originated in a vow made by Philip after the battle of Saint Quentin to erect a monastery and dedicate it to San Lorenzo, in place of one which his majesty had destroyed while bombarding the city.

The conventual palace was laid out in the form of a gridiron—the implement of torture used for the martyrdom of San Lorenzo, who, as is well known, was grilled alive.

Commenced in 1563 by Juan Bautista de Toledo, the gigantic pile, which was built of granite obtained from the neighbouring sierra, was not completed until twenty-one years later, by the celebrated Juan de Herrera. Indeed, it was not till nearly the close of the century that the work was absolutely ended.

From a seat hewn in the rock, amid a chesnut grove on the side of the mountain overlooking the spot, Philip watched the progress of his vast design. The rocky bench occupied by the moody monarch still exists, and is known as La Silla de Rey.

The Escorial comprehended a palace, a convent, a church, and a royal mausoleum. In the Podridero, or royal vault, at the period of our history

reposed three kings. In this splendid sepulchre the Emperor Charles V., Philip II., Philip III., and their wives and their descendants, have subsequently been laid.

The convent, which formed a considerable part of the vast structure, and which was endowed by its founder with a revenue of forty thousand crowns, was occupied by Hieronomite friars. An austere character pervaded the entire structure. There were an extraordinary number of apartments, many of them adorned with rare paintings and sculptures, but they were all gloomy. The magnificent library formed at the Escorial by Philip was removed to Madrid by his successor.

In planning the convent-palace it was the desire of its founder to build it of unsurpassable size and grandeur, and of such solid material that it should endure for ages. So far he succeeded, for the edifice still exists in all its primitive majesty. But he has stamped his own character upon the pile, and

the gloom which it wore in his days hangs over it still. The monks are gone—their revenues have been confiscated—but the Escorial is sadder and more sombre without them.

All the choicest paintings that adorned its chambers are gone too, and those that are left only speak of the glories of the past. Such was Philip's attachment to the structure, that, with his dying breath, he charged his son, as he would prosper, to take care of the Escorial.

By the Spaniards the mighty edifice is denominated the Eighth Wonder of the World.

And now let us rejoin the Duke de Cea and Graham, whom we left approaching the church.

On setting foot on the black and white marble pavement of the nave, Graham was awe-stricken by the grandeur and solemnity of the fane.

But though he admired the severe simplicity of its design—though he was charmed by the vaulted roof, in the midst of which rose the dome—though

he noted the numerous shrines, at all of which tapers were burning, lighting up the magnificent pictures and exquisite statues with which the walls were adorned—his attention soon became riveted by the high altar, the wonders of which were fully revealed by an immense silver chandelier, suspended from the superbly-painted roof. By the light of this splendid lamp, which was kept ever burning, he could discern the superb altar-screen, approached by nineteen marble steps, the exquisite columns of agate and jasper, the marvellous paintings, the gilt statues, and, above all, the magnificent tabernacle of gilt bronze, which it took seven years to fabricate.

But the objects that struck him most, and, indeed, startled him by their life-like effect, were the kneeling figures of gilt bronze ranged in the arcades on either side of the altar. The statues on the right were those of Philip II. with three of his wives—Queen Mary of England being omitted

—and his unhappy son, Don Carlos. Those on the left were the Emperor Charles V., his wife Elisabeth, his daughter the Empress Maria, and his sisters Eleanora and Maria.

"Nothing can be finer than those bronze statues," he remarked, in a low tone to De Cea.

"They are magnificent," replied the other. "One might easily cheat oneself into the belief that they are living persons engaged in prayer."

"For a moment I thought so," said Graham.

"Examine them more closely, and you will see with what accuracy the minutest detail of the costume is given," said De Cea. "The blazonry on the mantles of the two monarchs is admirable, as you can perceive even from this distance. In the Podridero, which lies beneath the high altar, rest all the personages you see there represented. Note, I pray you, the oratory on the right of the altar. In that small chamber Philip II. passed his latest hours. Through yon little window, without quit-

ting his couch, he could see the high altar, hear mass performed, and assist at the holy rites. There he breathed his last."

With noiseless footsteps Graham then moved towards the altar, and became so enthralled, that for some minutes he was not aware that De Cea had left him. Though somewhat surprised at his friend's disappearance, he continued his investigation of the marvels of the church, visiting the choir, the sacristy, the Pantheon, the Podridero, and the little chamber in which Philip died. And it was well there was so much to occupy his attention, for more than an hour elapsed before De Cea reappeared.

He was accompanied by Don Antonio Guino, and his looks gave augury of success.

"All goes well," he said. "I have seen Doña Flor. She will assist us."

"But what of Don Christobal?" said Graham.

"Neither he nor Don Pompeo can interfere

with us. They are both detained in Madrid," replied De Cea.

"Amazement!" exclaimed Graham. "How has this been effected?"

"Come this way, and you shall learn," replied De Cea, leading him into an aisle on the right, whither they were followed by Don Antonio.

"Now you shall hear what I have done to serve you," said De Cea. "During the interval between your visit to me and our departure, I caused inquiries to be made at Don Christobal's house, and ascertained that both he and Don Pompeo were in Madrid, but that their horses were ordered for six o'clock, at which hour they intended to set out for the Escorial. On learning this, I immediately flew to Olivarez, and obtained an order from him enjoining their attendance upon the king at the palace this evening, at nine o'clock. The order could not be disobeyed. I gave it to Don Antonio, who undertook to deliver it, and then to

follow me to the Escorial. This done, I set out tranquilly with you. Don Antonio will now tell you how the order was executed."

"It was a laughable scene," replied Don Antonio. "I waited to the last moment, and just as the two caballeros had mounted their horses and were about to depart, I rode up and delivered the order. You may imagine their rage and consternation. Don Pompeo swore terribly, but Don Christobal said little. However, there was nothing for it but obedience. They both dismounted, and Don Christobal called to one of his lacqueys, and bade him prepare to start instantly for the Escorial. 'I am going to the Escorial, señor,' I said, 'and will convey any message you may desire to send.' 'You will do me a great favour, señor, if you will deliver this ring to the Conde de Saldana,' he replied. 'He is at the palace—you will easily find him.' 'Ere two hours he shall have the ring, señor,' I replied. 'What are you about to do?'

cried Don Pompeo. 'If you send that token, all will be at an end.' 'It is useless to pursue the matter further,' rejoined Don Christobal. 'Fate is against me. I had come to the fixed determination that the marriage should take place to-night, or not at all. There is now an end of the affair. 'But the marriage may take place to-morrow,' urged Don Pompeo. 'No, let her wed Don Ricardo, if she will. I have done with her,' rejoined Don Christobal. 'Deliver the ring to the conde, señor,' he added to me. 'It shall be done without fail,' I returned. 'Have you any other message, señor?' 'None,' he replied. 'The conde will understand its import.' On this I left them, and galloped off to the Escorial. And here I am."

"Have you got the ring?" cried Graham.

"Here it is," replied Don Antonio. "But I cannot give it you. I have promised to deliver it to the Conde de Saldana."

"You shall deliver it to him," said De Cea. "Now come with me."

And they all three quitted the church, and entered the palace.

II.

THE RING.

On that same evening, in a large apartment in the palace were assembled the Conde de Saldana, Doña Casilda, and Doña Flor. The chamber, though well lighted and richly furnished, looked sombre, as did all the rooms in the Escorial.

For some time previously the conde had been in a state of great irritation and anxiety, but as he did not expect much sympathy from his daughters, he strove to control his feelings, and contented himself with expressing his extreme surprise at

the non-appearance of Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

Though his daughters could have easily set his mind at rest on that score, they did not care to give him any information—and, indeed, took no notice of his impatience.

Just at nine o'clock the door opened, and an aged monk, clad in the dark robes of the order of San Geronimo, and whose venerable appearance was heightened by a long grey beard, entered the room.

He saluted the party, and after looking round with surprise, remarked:

"All is prepared for the marriage. But where is the bridegroom?"

"I fear the marriage cannot take place to-night, as arranged, good father," replied the conde. "I do not know what has happened to Don Christobal. He and Don Pompeo ought to have been here an hour ago."

"I only waited Padre Benito's arrival to acquaint you with the truth, father," said Doña Flor. "They are detained in Madrid by an order from the minister."

"What do I hear?" exclaimed the conde. "Don Christobal and Don Pompeo detained by Olivarez! Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I begged her to remain silent, father," interposed Casilda. "Because I hoped and believed that Padre Benito, whose heart I know to be filled with kindness and compassion, would aid me in my efforts to induce you to forego this hateful marriage. A few words from your lips," she added to the friar, "will move my father, and make him change his purpose, even at the latest moment. Do not let me be sacrificed."

"Sacrificed! daughter," exclaimed the friar.

"If I am wedded to Don Christobal, I shall be made miserable for life," cried Casilda. "Oh! save me, holy father! save me!"

"My heart is indeed touched by your entreaties, daughter," said Padre Benito, "and I would gladly preserve you from the misery you anticipate. Oh, noble conde, let me add my supplications to those of your child. Reflect, while there is yet time. Do not let this irretrievable step be taken."

"Cease these entreaties, good father," replied the conde. "I cannot listen to them. I have given my promise to Don Christobal, and unless he releases me, the marriage must take place."

"I grieve to hear it," said the friar. "But Don Christobal may be moved."

"He is inflexible," rejoined the conde.

"Hear me, good father," said Casilda to the friar. "My heart is given to another. The conde knows it, and yet he will force me into this hateful match."

"I cannot help it," cried Saldana, in a voice of anguish. "Heaven knows I do not desire to make you miserable, my child! Heaven knows I would willingly give you to Don Ricardo, whom I

love as a son! But I am bound by chains that cannot be sundered."

"Can nothing be done to avert this dire calamity?" said Padre Benito.

"Nothing!—nothing!" groaned the conde.

"Yes, yes, all can be set right," cried Doña Flor. "Come in! come in!" she added, opening a side-door, and giving admittance to Graham and the two others.

An irrepressible cry of delight burst from Casilda, and, regardless of her father's presence, she flew towards her lover, who caught her in his arms.

For a few moments surprise kept the old conde silent, and Padre Benito made no remark, though he was too shrewd not to comprehend how matters stood.

"You will not mar their happiness, noble conde?" he said, at length.

"What am I to do?" groaned Saldana. "Don Christobal will not release me from my promise.

I besought him to do so when we last met, but he refused."

"His absence bespeaks that he has abandoned the marriage," remarked Padre Benito.

"I should think so, if he had sent me any token," said the conde. "But I have received none."

"I have a token from Don Christobal," said Don Antonio. "Three hours ago I left him in Madrid, and he desired me to give you this ring, saying you would understand its import."

"I do! I do!" exclaimed Saldana, joyfully. "This ring releases me from my promise."

"Then you are free to bestow your daughter on Don Ricardo, señor conde," said De Cea. "Come forward," he added to Graham and Casilda, "and let him join your hands and give you his benediction."

"Their hands shall be joined at the altar, and that without delay," said the conde, embracing them. "Luckily all is prepared."

"And the bridegroom has been found," said Padre Benito.

"And Don Christobal himself has sent the wedding-ring," added De Cea.

"Stay! I have something to say before we proceed to the chapel," cried the conde. "Sir Richard Graham, I know you love my daughter. I give her to you. But we have not yet spoken of her wedding portion."

"Oh! señor conde, heed not that!" cried Graham.

"Pardon me, amigo, the matter is really important, and ought to be arranged," interposed De Cea.

"It *shall* be arranged," rejoined the conde. "You know I never break my word, Sir Richard."

"I have good reason to know it, señor conde," he replied.

"Well, then, Casilda will bring you the same dower she would have brought Don Christobal."

"Nobly done!" cried De Cea; while Casilda threw her arms about her father's neck.

"I thank you from my heart, señor conde," said Graham; "but I should have been well content with Casilda without a wedding portion."

"That's all very well," whispered De Cea. "But it is much better as it is. And now that all is settled, señor conde," he added aloud, "let us proceed to the chapel."

"With all my heart," replied Saldana.

Attendants were then summoned, and the door being thrown open, the conde gave his hand to Casilda, and the whole party proceeded to the chapel.

"I congratulate you heartily, amigo," said De Cea to Graham, as they took their way along the corridor. "You have got a charming bride and a splendid wedding portion. Though the prince may fail, you at least have succeeded in making a capital Spanish Match."

III.

ROYAL PRESENTS.

THE last day that Charles had to spend in Madrid had now arrived, and he was conferring about his departure with Buckingham and Lord Kensington, when he received a visit from the Marquis de Avila, the king's principal rider.

The marquis, who was a very important-looking personage, came attended by four officers of the household, bearing presents for the prince.

"I am sent by the king to offer these gifts to your highness, as a mark of his majesty's brotherly love," said Avila. "This pistol with the sword

and dagger, set with diamonds, belonged to his majesty's illustrious grandsire, Philip II. With these cross-bows the Duke de Medina-Sidonia served his majesty. This pistol belonged to the Duke de Ossuna. These rapiers, of the finest workmanship of Toledo, were forged for the king himself, and have been used by his majesty. It is not on account of their value that his majesty begs your highness's acceptance of these weapons, but he conceives they may have some interest in your eyes."

"Gifts more acceptable could not possibly have been bestowed upon me," replied Charles. "I pray you tell his majesty so."

"I have more to offer on the part of his majesty," pursued Avila. "The king has sent your highness eighteen Spanish jennets, six Barbary horses of the purest race, as many mares, and twenty foals."

"And let me add, for I have seen them," said

Archie, who had entered at the same time as the marquis, "that all these jennets, Barbary horses, mares, and foals, are covered with mantles of crimson velvet, guarded with gold lace, and embroidered with the royal arms."

"I cannot thank his majesty sufficiently," said Charles. "Wear this, I pray you, marquis, as a token of my regard," he added, presenting him with a splendid diamond ring.

Avila bowed profoundly, placed the glittering gem upon his finger, and then, turning to Buckingham, said:

"His majesty sends your grace this diamond girdle."

"'Tis superb!" exclaimed Buckingham, enraptured.

"It is estimated at fifty thousand crowns, your grace," said Avila.

Buckingham detached a magnificent diamond clasp from his hat, and presented it to the marquis.

"Nay, my lord, this is too rich a gift," said Avila. "'Tis as valuable as the girdle."

"Keep it, I pray you," rejoined Buckingham.

Avila bowed profoundly.

"To you, my lord of Kensington," he said, "his majesty sends four Spanish horses and two hundred diamond buttons, as a mark of his regard."

"I fear I am forgotten," remarked Archie. "Tell his majesty I am beholden for what he has *not* sent."

"Thou art mistaken, gossip," rejoined Avila. "Thou wilt not go away empty handed. The king sends thee the largest donkey to be found in his dominions!"

"I humbly thank his majesty," replied Archie. "The animal will remind me of—I won't say whom. I have no diamond rings or brooches to bestow upon your lordship, and you won't deign, I suppose, to accept this bauble."

In the course of the morning other presents

were received by the prince. The queen sent him fifty skins of amber, and other costly perfumes. A casket filled with jewels was sent by the Infanta; and several paintings by the first masters, which had excited his admiration, were presented to him by Olivarez.

Charles made presents in return of equal magnificence, which were delivered by Lord Kensington.

To the king he sent a superb sword, the handle and scabbard of which were garnished with priceless gems. To the Infante Don Carlos he gave a ring containing a diamond of inestimable value set in a cup. To the Cardinal Infante Don Fernando he gave a pectoral of topazes and diamonds, having a large pendent pearl of the purest water. And to the Conde de Olivarez he gave a great diamond of eight carats, with a splendid pear-shaped pearl attached to it.

Other jewels were also presented by him to

the Duke del Infantado, the Admiral of Castile and Leon, and the Conde de Puebla.

As faithful chroniclers, we are also bound to record that before leaving Madrid the prince bestowed rich gifts upon all the gentlemen of the chamber and the king's pages. Moreover, he gratified the royal archers with four thousand crowns.

IV.

HOW CHARLES TOOK LEAVE OF THE INFANTA.

An hour before noon Charles, accompanied by Buckingham, and attended by Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, Lord Kensington, and other English nobles, proceeded to the king's chapel in the palace, where he found Philip, the Infantes Don Carlos and Don Fernando, Olivarez, and the state council.

At the altar stood the Patriarch of the Indies.

Kneeling before this high ecclesiastical dignitary, Philip and Charles solemnly swore to observe the terms of the matrimonial treaty entered into between them.

The oath taken, they arose.

Turning towards the assemblage, Charles then delivered a sealed packet to Bristol, saying, as he gave it,

"This packet contains the procuration empowering his majesty the king, or his Highness the Infante Don Carlos, to marry the Lady Infanta Maria in my name. On the arrival of the Pope's dispensation, your lordship will deliver the proxy to the king."

"It shall be done as your highness directs," rejoined Bristol.

"On my part," said Philip, addressing the assemblage, "I undertake to act as proxy for his highness the prince. And I further engage that the marriage shall take place before Christmas, at the latest."

This ceremony over, Charles returned to his own apartments in the palace, and for the next two hours his time was fully occupied in receiving the

various important personages who came to take formal leave of him.

Chief among these were the Papal Nuncio, the ambassadors of Germany and Venice, the corregidor of Madrid, the Conde de Gondomar, the members of the different councils, and the principal grandees of the court.

In bidding them adieu, Charles thanked them in cordial and gracious terms for their attention to him during his prolonged stay in Madrid. To each member of the state council, and to the corregidor, he presented a superb diamond ring.

Attended by several of his suite, Charles then repaired to the queen's apartments, for the purpose of taking formal leave of her majesty and the Infanta. He found them in a magnificent salon, surrounded by the principal ladies of the court, and attended by a host of gaily-attired pages and meninas.

The leave-taking was conducted with all the

rigid formality of Spanish etiquette. The conversation chiefly turned upon the presents made to the two illustrious ladies by the prince. To the queen he gave a magnificent diamond of twenty carats, a triangle of brilliants, and earrings, each having a diamond as large as a bean. Her majesty, who was passionately fond of jewels, was enraptured with the gifts.

To the Countess Olivarez he gave a cross of large diamonds, and to the Duchess de Gandia and the Countess de Lemos, the queen's principal ladies, he gave similar ornaments.

To the Infanta he gave a necklace of two hundred and fifty large pear-shaped pearls, a collar of great balass rubies, with knots of pearls, and two sets of pearl earrings of incalculable value.

"Do you like those pearls, Maria?" he said to her, in a low voice. "They are the choicest of the king my father's gems."

"They are beautiful—most beautiful," she re-

plied, in the same tone. "But I fear I shall never wear them."

The presentiment proved correct. The gems were subsequently returned to the prince.

As Charles took leave of the Infanta, in the cold and stately fashion prescribed by etiquette, he had much ado to maintain his firmness, and she had equal difficulty in repressing her emotion. Her hand trembled, and her lips and cheeks were bloodless.

"Farewell, Maria!" he said.

"Adios, prince!" she murmured.

Fixing upon her a look she never forgot, and which quite as eloquently as words proclaimed the anguish of his heart, Charles quitted the salon with his attendants.

When he was gone, the Infanta's strength quite forsook her, and she swooned away.

V.

WHEREIN IS RECOUNTED BY AN EXALTED PERSONAGE A LONG-PROMISED LEGEND.

In the evening, a farewell fête was given to the prince by the Earl of Bristol.

The entertainment was of the most splendid description, and all the royal family, with the exception of the Infanta, who was slightly indisposed, honoured it with their presence. The principal salon was converted into a ball-room for the occasion, and here those devoted to the dance remained; but the evening being magnificent, many

of the guests preferred wandering about the illuminated gardens.

Among those were the king and the royal party. After a few turns on the terrace, they seated themselves at the farther end of the lawn, where they were sufficiently removed from the sounds of revelry. Charles was with them, of course. Indeed, he and the king had been inseparable during the evening.

"This garden is very charming," remarked the queen.

"I thought it so when I first arrived at Madrid," replied Charles. "But since I have seen the gardens of the Buen Retiro, it appears insignificant."

"How comes the house to be so strangely designated?" she inquired.

"I am unable to inform your majesty," he replied. "Lord Bristol told me there was a legend attached to it, but he has never related it to me."

"I have heard the story, and will tell it you," said Philip. "It is a sort of family legend, for my grandsire is connected with it."

The Legend of the House of Seven Chimneys.

"You must know, then," began the king, "that this house, which has obtained a designation so singular, was built about fifty years ago by the Marquis de Xavalquinto, in the time of Philip II. Now the marquis was a very mysterious personage, and had even the reputation of being a magician, being addicted, it was said, to unlawful studies.

"In consequence of these rumours he was cited to appear before the Holy Inquisition, but nothing could be proved against him, and he was liberated. At the same time, certain papers found in his possession, and covered with cabalistic figures, which no one could understand, were ordered to be burnt. An odd circumstance then occurred.

A small piece of parchment escaped the flames —indeed, it was the opinion of the official employed to destroy these writings that it would not burn. Be this as it may, it was quite certain that while the rest of the papers were consumed, this parchment remained untouched. Upon it were written several sentences, but in a character which the official could not decipher.

"Instead of delivering the parchment to the chief inquisitor, as was his duty, the knave kept it in his own possession, but he was speedily punished, for he fell grievously sick, and, when dying, told the priest who attended him what he had done, and gave him the paper. The priest did not entirely believe in the baneful influence of the parchment, but deeming it right to obey the injunctions of the dying man, he delivered the mysterious scroll to the grand inquisitor. It chanced that on that very day the inquisitor had an audience with the king, so, taking the parch-

ment with him, he showed it to his majesty, telling him what had occurred.

"Philip regarded it with religious horror, but he at once perceived that the characters were Arabian, and sent for a person learned in that language to interpret them. When the scroll was shown to this man, he turned pale and trembled, but refused to communicate what he had found out to any other ear than that of his majesty. Upon this, Philip dismissed his attendants, and heard what the man had to say in private.

"Next day, without mentioning his design, Philip, accompanied by two attendants, went to Xavalquinto's mansion, and was very ceremoniously received by the old marquis, who humbly desired to know what had procured him the honour of a visit from his majesty.

"'You shall know that presently, my lord,' replied Philip, sternly. 'Meantime, I wish to see the garden.'

"'Your majesty has only to command,' replied Xavalquinto.

"And he then conducted the king to the garden. Without bestowing a regard at any object, Philip selected a spot whence he could obtain a good view of the house. Very possibly he stationed himself where we are now seated. After examining the structure for a few minutes, he said to Xavalquinto, fixing a searching glance upon him as he spoke,

"'How many chimneys has your house, my lord?'

"'Six, sire,' replied the marquis, surprised at the question.

"'There ought to be seven,' said the king. 'Let another be built without delay.'

"'But, sire, another chimney will spoil the symmetry of the building,' remonstrated Xavalquinto.

"'No matter. I will have it done,' rejoined Philip, peremptorily.

"'I would rather your majesty would order me

to pull down the mansion than so to disfigure it,' said Xavalquinto.

"'It will not be disfigured,' said Philip. 'Pull down that belvidere, and build the seventh chimney in its place.'

"'Sire, that belvidere is my place of study—where I pursue my scientific labours—whence I consult the stars. Do not, I conjure you, compel me to destroy it. My fate is linked with that belvidere. If it falls, I shall fall.'

"'How know you that?' asked the king, sternly.

"'The stars have told me so, sire.'

"'Tut! this is idle,' rejoined Philip. 'You have some other reason for refusing to obey me. But since you hesitate, I myself will do the work. I will build the seventh chimney.'

"'Will nothing turn you from your purpose, sire?'

"'Nothing,' replied the king. 'I am as inexorable as Satan would be to his bond slave.'

"Xavalquinto shook from head to foot at this observation, but partially recovering himself, he said:

"'You have sealed my doom, sire. But leave the task to me. I ask no further favour. If your majesty will come again to-morrow, you will find the work done.'

"'If you can complete it in so short a time, you must have quicker workmen than mine,' said the king. 'But let it be so. I will return at this hour to-morrow, and see what progress you have made. Till the work is done, you must remain a prisoner in your own house.'

"Xavalquinto bowed, and the king departed.

"When his majesty came again on the following day, he found the household of the marquis in great consternation. During the night strange noises had been heard, but no one got up to see what was the matter. In the morning the cause of these nocturnal disturbances was apparent. In

the principal salon on the ground floor, in that very room, in fact, where dancing is now going on, a panel had been removed, disclosing a fireplace, the existence of which no one had suspected.

"Philip immediately went to look at it, and after satisfying himself of the correctness of the information, he turned to the intendant, who accompanied him, and asked for the marquis.

"The marquis was gone.

"'Gone!' exclaimed the king, angrily. 'He has broken his word. I ought to have placed a guard over him.'

"He then mounted to the belvidere, and on reaching it found a trap-door yawning wide open in the floor of the little turret.

"On looking into this aperture the funnel of a chimney could be perceived, which evidently communicated with the fireplace in the great salon.

"Here, then, was the Seventh Chimney. The work was done, but where was the marquis?

"'The devil must have flown away with him, sire,' remarked the intendant.

"Philip was of the same opinion, for he had learnt from the mysterious scroll that the marquis had bartered his soul to the Evil One. When the seventh chimney was completed, Satan could claim fulfilment of the compact.

"Possibly this was so, for the marquis was never heard of more, though some of his household affirmed that he had again fallen into the hands of the Holy Inquisition, and was burnt at an Auto da Fé. Let us hope the latter supposition was correct, since in that case his soul may have been saved.

"From the day of his disappearance, till now, Xavalquinto's mansion has been known as the House of Seven Chimneys."

The story was listened to with great apparent interest, especially by Charles, but the royal nar-

rator did not give time for any remarks upon it, for at its conclusion he arose and returned to the house.

Passing through an open window looking upon the terrace, his majesty entered an ante-chamber communicating with the ball-room. Here were assembled the Earl of Bristol and several of his most distinguished guests.

After the king had taken his seat upon a fauteuil, he glanced at the group around him, and, perceiving De Cea, signed to him to approach.

"Where have you been, my lord?" he inquired. "You were not at the palace last night."

"No, sire, I was at the Escorial, assisting at a marriage."

"Indeed! Who has been married?" demanded Philip.

"The happy pair are in this room, sire," replied De Cea. "If you will cast your eyes round, you will at once detect them."

"The only persons I behold, answering to such a description, are Sir Richard Graham and Doña Casilda," said the king. "But surely they cannot be married?"

"The ceremony was performed last night, sire."

"But, I trust, with the consent of the Conde de Saldana?" said Philip.

"With his full consent and approval, sire. Don Christobal liberated the conde from his promise, so that the only obstacle to the union was removed."

"Since that is so, all is well," replied Philip. "Let them approach."

And as Sir Richard Graham and his blushing bride came forward and made their obeisances, his majesty graciously offered them his congratulations.

"I hope you are not going to deprive us of one of the brightest ornaments of our court, Sir Richard?" said Philip, smiling.

"I must return to England with the prince, sire," returned Graham. "And I cannot leave my wife behind me."

"I wish I could induce Don Ricardo to remain in Madrid, sire," remarked Casilda; "but, as he will go, I must accompany him."

"Nay, you are bound to do that," said the king. "But I hope you will bring him back soon. Has your highness been in the secret of this match?" he added, turning to Charles.

"I knew that Sir Richard was enamoured of the lady, sire," replied the prince. "But I scarcely expected the affair would terminate so happily. You are a fortunate man, Dick," he added to Graham.

"Your highness will say so when you learn what a prodigious dowry his bride has brought him," said De Cea.

"Well, Sir Richard," said the king, "I must again congratulate you upon the prize you have

won. Others of your countrymen would do well to follow your example. And now, my lord, we must bid you good night," he added to the Earl of Bristol. "We thank you heartily for your entertainment."

Philip and the royal party then took their departure, and Charles soon afterwards quitted the fête. While crossing the entrance-hall, accompanied by Buckingham, he encountered Olivarez, who attended him to his coach.

Before entering the carriage, Buckingham turned to Olivarez, and said haughtily:

"I bid your excellency farewell. I shall ever remain the faithful servant of the King of Spain, of her majesty the queen, and of the Lady Infanta, and will render them all the good offices in my power. But to your excellency I make no professions of friendship. You have so systematically opposed me, and have striven so anxiously to thwart my purposes, that I cannot but regard you as an enemy."

"You regard me rightly, my lord," rejoined Olivarez. "I am your enemy, my lord—your implacable enemy."

And he turned upon his heel.

VI.

THE FAREWELL AT THE FRESNADA.

NEXT morning, Charles quitted Madrid, never to return thither.

He was attended by all the English nobles and gentlemen forming his suite, and was accompanied as far as the Escorial by the king, the whole of the royal family, and the principal grandees of the court.

The cortége was preceded by a guard of archers, under the command of Don Melchior del Alcazar, and comprised a long train of carriages and horse-

litters, with a troop of seven hundred well-mounted and superbly arrayed horsemen.

At the Escorial Charles remained for two days, where he was entertained with regal hospitality by Philip, and shown all the wonders of the mighty convent-palace.

On the third day, the whole party proceeded, at an early hour, to the Fresnada, a royal hunting-seat, situated in a wood on the side of the Guadarrama, about a league from the Escorial. In this wood a stag was chased and killed, after which a banquet was spread beneath the trees.

The parting hour had now arrived. Charles tenderly embraced the king; took leave of the queen and the two princes; and bade a last adieu to the Infanta.

A last adieu, we say, for he never beheld her more.

A little marble column reared in the wood marks the spot where this parting occurred.

Shortly after the farewell at the Fresnada, two troops might be seen moving in opposite directions; one descending towards the Escorial, the other climbing the rugged sides of the Guadarrama.

Charles found the fleet awaiting him at Santander. On embarking on the *Prince Royal*, he observed to the Earl of Rutland, who received him, and congratulated him on his safe arrival, "It was great weakness and folly in Olivarez to let me go so easily, after treating me so badly."

Buckingham took care that the Spanish Match should be broken off, but he quickly made up another, and fulfilled his promise by finding Charles a consort in Henriette Marie.

Would the prince have been happier if he had wedded the Infanta?

THE END.

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